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Adrian Wijemanne on THE WAR OF TAMIL INDEPENDENCE

Hot Spring

A Journal of Commitment

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CRITERIA FOR A SOLUTION

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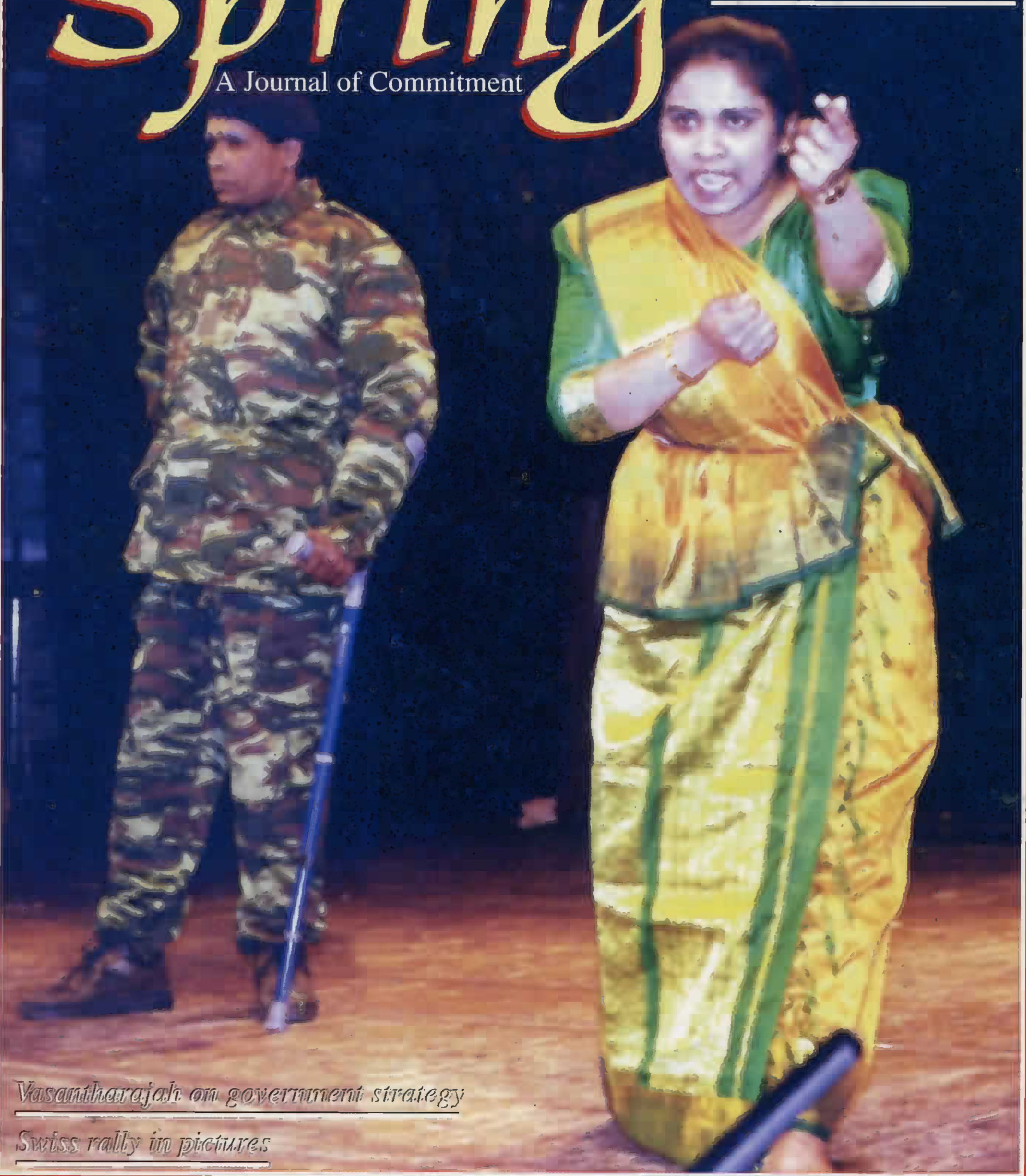
WAR DIARY: MARCH - APRIL

Cows, Mad Cows &
Sacred Cows



Vasantharajah on government strategy

Swiss rally in pictures

Vol: 1 Nº: 1

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Hot Spring
A journal of commitment

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On the cover

Two characters from a satirical playlet in folk style staged in Paris recently.

It was one of several items in a cultural evening held in memory of Annai Poopathy, who fasted to death in 1988 in the Tamil cause.

Comment

WHEN WILL THE WORLD SPEAK?

"Without the knowledge that Human Rights exist, people cannot seek their own protection.

Without the knowledge that Human Rights are violated, no individual or organisation can seek to provide protection

Both the promotion and protection of Human Rights therefore require THAT INFORMATION BE AVAILABLE TO ALL...."

The tragedy of the Eelam Tamils in Sri Lanka today is that they have become victims of an information crunch. That is not the worst of their misfortunes, but that is one. Told as we are that we are living in a world of information explosion, the Tamils are at the receiving end of an oppressive Sri Lankan government that has been successfully resorting to disinformation, misinformation and information pollution, aided and abetted by a censored media and international news agencies and journalists denied access to the war zone, but are content to forego their professional integrity and accept handouts, photographs and video clips from one party to a conflict and pass it off as true information.

Why is the world which is (quite rightly) concerned about the Israeli killing of a hundred civilians in Lebanon, unable to see the carnage in northeast Sri Lanka? Israeli targets were supposed to be Hizbulla guerilla bases, but the victims turned out to be defenceless civilians. The Sri Lankan government makes the same claim of fighting a war with the Tamil guerillas, with the help of Israeli war planes but continues to kill, batter, bruise and starve tens of thousands of Tamil civilians. Why is a world that is prepared to empathize with human suffering in one part of the world, unable to see a greater human tragedy elsewhere? Why are world governments silent? Is it in the nature of most governments to fall in line with fellow governments unless and until their own strategic interests get adversely affected in one way or another?

Why was the world unable to see the massacre of 65 Tamil civilians in the Navaly church bombing in July '96? Or the army slaughter of 24 peaceful villagers in Kumarapuram in Trincomalee district in February '96? Or the mowing down of over a dozen school children at Nagarkovil school in the North? Or the burning down with napalm bombs of a refugee settlement at Nachchikudah in March '96, killing ten on the spot and blighting the life of 47 others with critical burn injuries? Even a respected organisation such as Amnesty International has in recent times appears to be displaying more concern for Sinhalese lives than Tamil lives! Does it mean that Tamil civilian lives have become more expendable? But for the efforts of humanitarian bodies like the ICRC and MSF, the truth of many of these outrages would not have been known. More than half a million Tamils today are either internally displaced or have become captives of the Sri Lankan armed forces. Cannot the world see that State terrorism in Sri Lanka is now uglily turning into Fascism under emergency rule and is prepared to lay hands on its own people, the Sinhalese? The Tamils may well reflect on what a cynic once observed: God himself is on the side of big battalions!

HOT SPRING appears during the darkest hour of Tamil history; indeed of Sri Lankan history never before experienced during 450 years of western colonialism. HOT SPRING comes as the only voice with an international reach with an uncompromising commitment to human rights and the Tamil cause. How it fares in influencing world opinion depends entirely on its readers and backers among the expatriate communities. "A man can't ride your back", said Martin Luther King once, "unless it is bent" It will be the primary function of HOT SPRING to see that Tamil backs are unbent. ●

“WHAT THEY SAY”

THE EAST WILL BE CLEARED OF TIGER PRESENCE BEFORE THAI PONGAL..WE WILL END THE WAR BEFORE THE (SINHALA) NEW YEAR.

-Junior Defence Minister Col.(now Gen.) Anurudha Ratwatte quoted in various Colombo newspapers.

"WE ARE GOING ACCORDING TO A SET PLAN AND WE WILL ANNIHILATE THE TERRORISTS SOON "..

"NEXT TIME I VISIT YOU, IT WILL BE AFTER CRUSHING THE TIGERS...

-Anurudha Ratwatte at public rallies in Moneragala, Riyadh Daily, Saudi Arabia, April 8, 1996

I KNOW ONE WAYWARD SINHALESE SOUL WHO DELIBERATELY ENJOYED READING THE MISINFORMATION IN THE DAILY NEWS BECAUSE IT WAS MORE SATISFYING TO READ DOCTORED ACCOUNTS THAN HAVING TO READ THAT MORE GOVERNMENT SOLDIERS DIED RATHER THAN TIGERS

- Indra de Soysa, Ph.D. student, University of Alabama, writing in the Weekend Express, Colombo, Feb.17-18

THE BETRAYAL OF THE TAMILS WAS THE GREATEST MISTAKE OF THE LSSP.

- Regi Siriwardene, writer and literary critic, Sunday Observer, April 7, 1996

WHAT THE PRESIDENT SAYS DOES NOT MATTER HERE.IT IS WHAT WE SAY THAT GOES. SO GET LOST

- angry policeman in Vavuniya telling BBC correspondent George Arney, quoted by Frederica Jansz, Sunday Leader, March 31, 1996

SHE (CHANDRIKA) IS EXTREMELY UNPUNCTUAL.. SHE HAS ALWAYS BEEN THAT. THE PROBLEM WITH HER IS WHEN SHE STARTS TALKING, SHE DOESN'T STOP

- UNP MP Anura Bandaranaike talking of his sister, Sunday Leader, March 31, 1996.

SHOULD NOT THE TAMILS IN THE NORTH AND EAST, MORE THAN THE MISERABLE TAMILS HOLED OUT IN COLOMBO BE GIVEN AN OPPORTUNITY TO DECIDE ABOUT WHAT AFFECTS THEIR DESTINIES.. CAN IT BE TRUTHFULLY SAID THAT THEIR SO-CALLED REPRESENTATIVES HUDDLED IN DEAD-ENDS OF COLOMBO.MOST OF WHOM HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO ACCESS TO THOSE WHOM THEY ARE SUPPOSED TO REPRESENT. CAN RIGHTFULLY DECIDE FOR THE TAMILS OF THE NORTH AND EAST?

- Tamil Congress leader G.G.Ponnambalam, in a letter to President Chandrika, Sunday Leader, March 24, 1996

IT DOES NOT SEEM TO OCCUR TO THESE ARDENT NATIONALISTS THAT PERHAPS THE TAMILS BECAME SEPARATIST TERRORISTS PRECISELY BECAUSE IN 1956, 1958, 1977, 1979, 1981 AND 1983, MANY OF THEM WERE HUMILIATED, MANHANDLED,LOOTED, ASSAULTED, KILLED OR BURNT ALIVE..

- Prof.Carlo Fonseka, The Island, Colombo, March 17.

International

The United States is in Asia as long as it is wanted , and "as long as people have any fear at all that some countries might seek to dominate others"

- President Bill Clinton in Tokyo, April 17

"We sued for peace: the British wanted war. If that's what they want, we will give them another 25 years of war"

- a message from senior military commanders of the Irish Republican Army, relayed by Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams

"Ever since I came back from jail, not once has the defendant entered my bedroom whilst I was awake.... I was the loneliest man during the time I stayed with her "

- President Nelson Mandela about his wife Winnie at the divorce hearing

"I walk three steps behind my husband in public. Or maybe five steps.". I think it is quite different in the US. I don't interfere in my husband's business, not with my mouth, hands or legs"

- Japan's first lady, Kumiko Hashimoto on the eve of Hillary Clinton's visit to Tokyo.

“Everthing I did, I did for the Torah of Israel and the land of Israel”

- Israel Prime Minister Yitzhak Ranin's assassin Yigal Amir at the trial.

Presidential pronouncements

on Tamil national leader Velupillai Pirabakaran ".A MERCILESS MEGALOMANIAC

- India Today interview, May 15. 1995

on former President J.R.Jayawardene

" HE WAS THE DIRTIEST OF POLITICIANS

- same interview

on former President R.Premadasa

HE WAS ANOTHER MAN WHO NEEDED PSYCHIATRIC TREATMENT PRETTY SERIOUSLY

- same interview

on government-supportive Tamil groups in Colombo

THERE IS A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF UNTRUTH IN WHAT THEY ARE SAYING. I THINK THERE IS A LOT OF DISHONESTY AMONG (them)

- interview with Malini Parthasarathy of The Hindu

on Tamils living in Colombo and the south

THE TAMIL PEOPLE HAVE IN FACT SILENTLY, AND SOME OF THEM NOT SO SILENTLY, HAVE SUPPORTED THE LTTE IN THEIR ACTIVITIES. EVERY SINGLE TAMIL PERSON IN COLOMBO AND IN THE SOUTH BY THEIR SILENCE ARE SUPPORTING THE LTTE TERROR.

- interview with Star TV and aired on March 10.

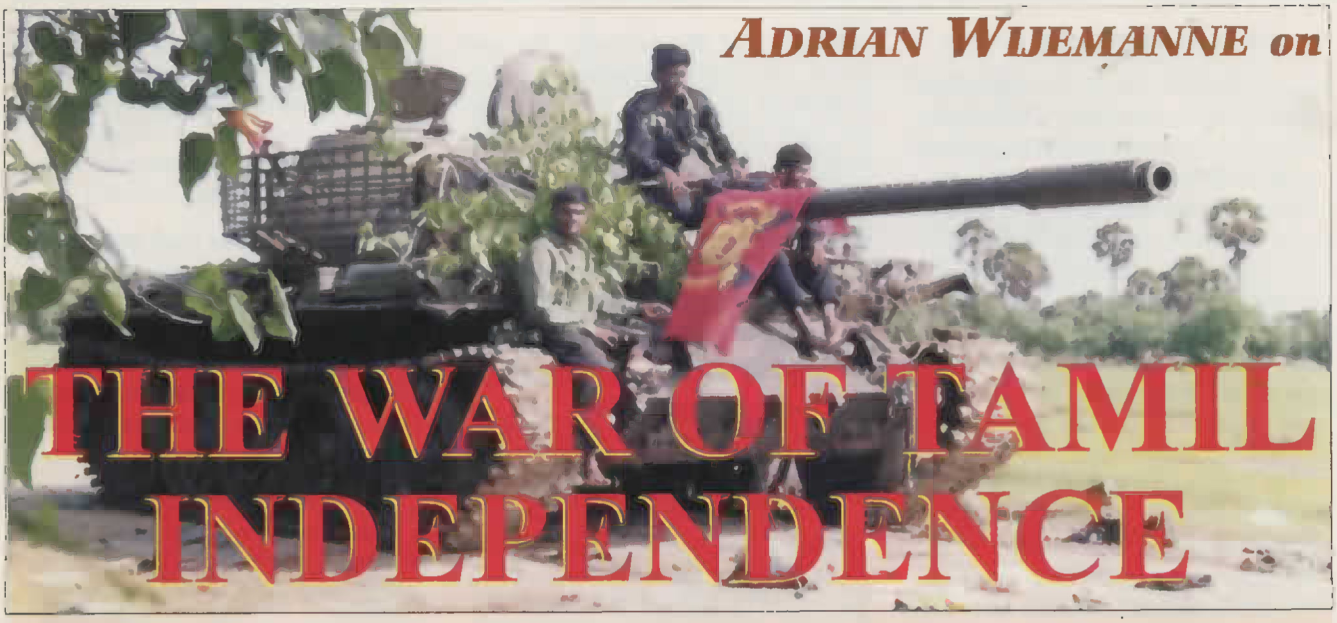
on herself

FEAR IS A WORD I DO NOT KNOW

- India Today interview, May 15, 1995.

ADRIAN WIJEMANNE on

THE WAR OF TAMIL INDEPENDENCE



1. The near-48-year history of independent Sri Lanka presents an unique, challenging and ominous paradox. Here is a state which secured independence from imperial rule without a shot being fired or a single life lost; and yet, its first 35 years of parliamentary government has produced an internal war of independence by the Tamil nation, a war which grows in intensity by the day and already has cost thousands of lives, produced a million refugees and caused massive destruction of property mainly of the Tamil people.The peaceful imperial disengagement seems to hold no lessons for the successor government.

2. The tragedy shows up in poignant relief the difference between parliamentary government and democracy. They may coincide and produce a cohesive state based upon the consent of the governed. Contrariwise, parliamentary government may exist without democracy and produce oppression and war. This difference is perfectly illustrated by the former imperial ruler (the U.K.) and the successor state of Sri Lanka.

3. In the U.K. it is the universally accepted principle that if, by a majority vote, any of the constituent nations of the U.K. (English, Irish,Scottish or Welsh) decides to secede from the U.K. and become a totally independent, separate, sovereign state, there would be no let or hindrance to its doing so. Indeed such a separation actually took place in 1922 when 26 counties on the island of Ireland seceded to form the free, independent, sovereign state of Eire (now The Irish Republic). **The principle of freedom to secede is repeatedly re-iterated at every general election in the U.K. as there are political parties contesting such elections with precisely that stated objective of secession. The sanctity of the vox populi of a nation is the bedrock of democratic life in the U.K.; it is a basic principle of public morality to which British nationals of Sinhala and Tamil origin residing in the U.K. subscribe without reservation. The coincidence of parliamentary government and democratic principle produces a cohesive state based upon the consent of the governed.**

4. In Sri Lanka precisely the opposite is the case. It has been made perfectly clear to the Tamil nation, after it voted overwhelmingly in 1977 for secession, that under no circumstances will they be allowed to secede. The will of the Tamil nation in that respect will be crushed by the military might of the successor state. The majority wish of a nation, expressed in a free vote at a general election, counts for nothing if it is unacceptable to the wish of the larger nation. That is how parliamentary government has operated in independent Sri Lanka. It is parliamentary government at a distant remove from democracy. It is that disjunction that has produced war.

5. Nor is there the slightest prospect of a remedy in the various constitutional reforms that have been produced from time to time by the government. All of them, without exception, aim to preserve the paramountcy of the single all-island state. That supersedes all considerations of democracy or the majority will of a people to secede. The utmost care is taken to eliminate the slightest vestige of a right of secession. The paramountcy of the single all island state, to be clamped on unwilling subjects by military force if needs be, is the basic principle of political organisation. The freely-given consent of the governed is seemingly unheard of and unknown.

6. It is a classic disjuncture of parliamentary government and democracy. It has produced not a cohesive, let alone harmonious, society but one riven by rancorous discord and finally plunged into war.

RELEVANT MORAL ISSUES

7. In every war both parties regard themselves as endowed with moral justification. It cannot be otherwise for war requires the killing of the troops of one's adversary and encourages the sacrifice of the lives of one's own. So the doctrine of the casus belli includes an essential element of moral justification. Much has been, and continues to be, written on the subject. I urge everyone troubled by the deep anguish about the moral righteousness of the positions of our respective nations in this war to read and reread Michael Walzer's JUST AND UNJUST WARS (Basic Books, Harper / Collins USA, 2nd Edition 1992)

8. For the Sinhala people the moral justification for the war goes something like this. " It is the Tamil people who are trying to split up the single all-island state and usurp, even in part, the sovereignity which that state now possesses. Such an extreme step is not warranted by the grievances they profess to have, all of which could be amicably settled by negotiation and secured further by constitutional change. It is they who have taken up arms against the state. We have both the right and the duty to protect the state from subversion and final subdivision".

9. The position of the Tamil nation is best stated by the Tamil people and, indeed, only by them. Nevertheless, as far as I can understand it, their basic position is that they can secure their physical safety and the integrity of their homeland only by establishing a state of their own in the area in which they are domiciled as the majority of the resident population. The only means by which this end can be secured is by armed struggle and war.

10. The weakness of the Sinhala case lies in its arrogating to itself the right to decide that Tamil grievances can be amicably settled. **That is a matter for the Tamil people, not the Sinhala people, to decide - it is the victim, not the offender, who has the right to decide on the nature and adequacy of the redress.** The end result of the Sinhala position is the totally immoral denial to the Tamil nation of the right to rule itself in a state of its own

11. The conclusion is inescapable that the Sinhala position in respect of the casus belli is devoid of moral justification and is based on a culpable folie de grandeur.

THE PRACTICAL ASPECT

12. In respect of practical possibility too the Sinhala position is in equally egregious error. A modern state, headed willy nilly for the rigours of economic competition in the 2lst century, requires to be founded upon the freely-given consent of its citizens. It is impossible to found a modern state upon the continuous application of military force to a section of its citizens to repress their desire to secede. Eric Hobsbawm in his "The Age of Uncertainty" refers to the "democratization of the means of violence" i.e. the ease with which dissident elements in a state can arm themselves with a formidable array of weapons, explosives etc. in support of their' objectives. The state's exclusive monopoly of military force is now a dead-letter. Modern states, existing with ever-diminishing controls over the movement of goods and information and people and funds, are more and more vulnerable to urban guerilla warfare (demonized as "terrorism"). Even so hallowed a precinct as Downing Street in the heart of London has had mortar fire rained down upon it from a small passing van firing through its sun-roof !

13. No state, not even the richest and most powerful, can protect all of its physical assets 24 hours a day 365 days of the year due to the crippling cost of such an effort. For a desperately poor country such as Sri Lanka such an attempt would precipitate financial ruin in the short term.

4. It is an absolute sine qua non for a modern state that it should be founded upon a minimally cohesive society in which secessionist tendencies are marginal and are contained on the periphery by political means long before they even aspire to armed struggle, leave alone resort to open, organised warfare. It is perfectly plain that in Sri Lanka the situation has long passed that point and now poses the unthinkable and palpably impossible prospect of continuous military suppression. The limits of the practicability of such a course will soon become apparent and could undermine the very existence of civil government.

15. There is now no viable or rational alternative to bringing the dimensions of the state into line with a society from which it can derive freely-given

Sri Lanka pours mor

By Rohan Gunasekera

COLOMBO, March 25 (Reuter) - Sri Lanka's military is pouring troops into northern bases in a buildup for a new offensive against Tamil Tiger guerrillas, as the rebels step up attacks in the east, military officials and residents said on Monday.

"We're planning another operation in the (northern) Jaffna peninsula," an army officer in charge of operations said.

The offensive, involving thousands of troops, backed by tanks, artillery, air and naval gun fire support, is expected in the next three weeks in the peninsula, he said.

Deputy Defence Minister Anuruddha Ratwatte recently said he would end the 13-year ethnic war before the traditional Sinhala and Tamil new year on April 14, a remark widely interpreted as heralding a major onslaught against the rebels.

The military is believed to be aiming at Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) positions in the eastern half of the peninsula, especially consent. Only then can the long march to modernity and progress and self-fulfilment begin.

CONCEPTUAL PROBLEMS CONCERNING THE WAR

16.For the Sri Lankan government and its armed services as well as for the Sinhala people this is their first experience of modern war. All of them display the naivete of primitive magnitudinism - the belief is universal that since the Sinhala side is larger in every physical element, since it has vastly greater financial and economic resources to back its war effort, it is a foregone conclusion that victory will be theirs however long postponed. No account is taken of the numerous instances in recent world history where precisely the opposite has occurred.

17. Just at present large sections of the Sinhala people and many of its leaders believe confidently that victory in the battle for Jaffna, now in progress, will mean the end of the war. Their own very recent history is forgotten. **That the IPKF took Jaffna in October '87 but that their war with the LTTE continued for a further 18 months with ever increasing ferocity until the IPKF withdrew in April '89 is forgotten. Wishful thinking has replaced realism.**

18. Little is known about the true and deadly nature of nationalist guerilla wars of secession; that their duration is to be measured in decades rather in years; that the guerillas are strengthened instead of weakened by the prolonged duration of the conflict; that nationalism thrives on military reverses and cannot be extinguished by military force - all of these repeatedly proven factors of the world's recent experience are unknown.

19. The new stage of the war could well include the dreaded element of urban guerilla warfare waged in the populated centres of Sinhala society. Colombo has already had its first taste of it. Other cities and towns in the Sinhala heartland could experience for the first time the devastation that such attacks could cause. **The IPKF could not be attacked in this way for the urban centres of its origin lay in another country and beyond the LTTE's reach. The opposite is the case now. Furthermore, when repressive defensive measures begin to affect the Tamil plantation population on a large scale their present cautious, pragmatic leadership could be undermined. The policies of the Sri Lankan government at this juncture could well produce a Prabhakaran in the hill country exactly as they did in the north.**

20. The recent enormous increase in refugees is a factor of great military and tactical importance in a guerilla war. Israel has learnt to its cost how the squalid refugee camps of Lebanon and the Gaza strip became a fertile recruiting ground for all the numerous Arab guerilla movements, not just the PLO. It is not too exaggerated to say that as long as there are refugee camps, so long will there be guerilla warfare. The battle for the hearts and minds of the young men and young women who languish in refugee camps can never be won by the forces that put them there; it is those who offer them the challenge of winning their scurity and dignity by the force of their own arms who have won their allegiance time and again.

21. The military offensive that commenced in October '95 marks a watershed in the war of Tamil independence in a manner undreamt of by the Sinhala government, its armed forces and the Sinhala nation.

FEATURES OF THE SRI LANKAN GOVERNMENT'S MILITARY EFFORT

22. Earlier in this paper it was stated that a war of this type is essentially a war of attrition. In all such wars it has been the government fighting to preserve the status quo (in Sri Lanka the single all-island state) which suffers attrition before the nationalist guerillas. How long such a war will last in Sri Lanka depends upon several factors peculiar to this particular conflict.

23. Sri Lanka has no armaments industry worth the name. Nearly everything required by its armed forces has to be imported and paid for in scarce foreign exchange. The purchase of new, state of-the-art, equipment is completely beyond the limited funds available so used and/or obsolete items being jettisoned by desperately cash strapped East European countries (e.g. the 2 Antonov transport aircraft which plunged into the sea shortly after being received in Sri Lanka) are

troops to the North

Sea Tiger naval wing bases in Velvettiturai.

Much of the western part of the peninsula fell under army control after troops captured the rebels' Jaffna town stronghold last December in a seven week-long offensive.

Military officials said troops had been sent by air and sea to reinforce bases in and around the Jaffna peninsula.

Residents reported seeing troops boarding vessels in the eastern port of Trincomalee bound for Jaffna.

Landing craft were also spotted disgorging troops at Vettilaikerni, part of the sprawling Elephant Pass army base at the entrance to the Jaffna peninsula, residents said.

Troops had been redeployed to the north from the east where marauding groups of Tigers have begun mauling army patrols, military officials said.

"The situation (in the east) is very bad," the army officer said. "We've lost more than 100 men in the past few days."

purchased. The IPKF, on the other hand, was backed by India's large armaments industry some of whose factories are located in Tamilnadu state, north of Madras.

24. In addition Sri Lanka suffers from a very precarious foreign exchange balance. It is able to service its foreign loans largely from the annual foreign exchange transfusions from the international aid consortium. The garment export industry, which is the largest foreign exchange earner, requires a great deal of foreign exchange for the import of its raw materials. Tourism too entails foreign exchange outgoings though on a lesser scale. Both these industries are very vulnerable to the hazards of urban guerilla warfare. The needed defensive counter-measures themselves will affect tourism adversely even if there are no guerilla attacks on tourist facilities.

25. In the U.K., which has a full-blown armaments industry, the government was able to sustain the 26-year anti-guerilla war against the IRA but was unable to crush the guerillas. Even without any imports of armaments that effort cost the U.K. £ 3.5 billion per year to contaln a mere 300 guerillas of the IRA. That enormous drain on its resources has contributed in no small measure to the U.K.'s current lowly standing in the world's prosperity league.

26. The recent escalation of the war in Sri Lanka, entailing increased imports of military hardware of all types, will swallow up foreign exchange earnings and reserves on a scale that cannot be long sustained. Already the scarcity of foreign exchange is being reflected in the steep decline in the exchange rate of the Sri Lanka rupee and this will add to the inflationary impetus of local-currency military expenditures.

27. It is extremely unlikely, therefore, that the present high-intensity military operation can be sustained at this level for another 12 months. This could result in a reversion to a low-intensity holding operation which could drag on for decades.

STATES IN THE MODERN WORLD

28. In a fast shrinking world every state becomes enmeshed willy-nilly in ever-closer, and ever-more competitive, relationships with its trading and investing fellow members of the comity of nations. To build up such relationships on a reasonably equitable basis competitive capability needs to be constantly up graded. This can be done only in conditions of peace. Every state engaged in a long-drawn-out war falls back in relative terms. Sri Lanka is one of the best examples of this. In 1948, when Sri Lanka became independent, it had a g.n.p. per capita per annum of around US$ 200-, the same as another British colony, The Federated Malay States. Today the figures are Sri Lanka US$ 580-, Singapore US$ 18,200 and Malaysia US$ 3200-. In 1962 The Federated Malay States split up peacefully without a shot being fired or a single life lost into two independent, sovereign states.

29. As the world progresses primitiveness acquires a new connotation with every passing decade. Long-continued war will unquestionably relegate Sri Lanka (as it has already done Myanmar now in the 47th year of an exactly similar war) to the lower levels of primitiveness as the new century dawns and progresses.

THE TAMIL STATE ON THE ISLAND

30. A state is, in the last resort, a state of mind. In that sense the Tamil state already exists in the hearts and minds of the Tamil people. The assumption of the overt forms of a state is delayed by the continuance of the war of independence. That delay is unavoidable for a war of independence must necessarily be a war of attrition, not one in which a military victory can be secured. That is the esence of nationalist guerilla wars of secession. The continuance of such a war day by day is a daily victory which contributes towards the final objective of independence.

THE ROLE OF A NATIONAL DIASPORA

31: In many wars of independence a national diaspora has played an important part. The classic examples are the Jewish and Irish diaspora, both of which contributed towards the establishment of an independent state for each of their nations and continues to participate in the work of nation-building. Both followed near identical courses. First, financial, logistical and moral support for their emerging states locked in war. Then the clear explication to host nations and the international community of the raison d'etre of the war of independence. Next the long and patient endeavour to secure their foothold in the host country, obtain citizenship and voting rights and through them infiuence public understanding and secure media support for the struggle of their compatriots back home. Finally, when the time is right, the build-up towards securing the sponsorship of the host state for the international recognition of the' emergent state. There is no doubt that the Tamil diaspora, which shares so many characteristics of the Jewish, will tread this well worn road until the independence of the Tamil state is achieved and it joins the comity of nations.

CONCLUSION

32. Wars of independence, like other wars, come to an end some day. All wars of independence (save the Biafran struggle which was not a guerilla war but a conventional war fought by regular army units of Biafran extraction) have ended by the securing of independent statehood by the nation fighting for it. **In Sri Lanka the stage is now set for a long-drawn-out guerilla war, the total impoverishment of both nations, the demise of civil government among the Sinhala people and the eventual establishment of the state of Eelam. The best efforts of the Sinhala state can only postpone this sequence of events - they cannot avert the final outcome.**

The Sri Lankan Scene

SO THE ATHULATHMUDALI ASSASSIN WAS NOT A TAMIL TIGER AFTER ALL?

This is a report from the government-owned newspaper, the SUNDAY OBSERVER of April 7, 1996:

ATHULATHMUDALI KILLER IDENTIFIED?: The Athulathmudali assassination case took a dramatic turn last week with the identification of a man as possibly the real assassin who shot and killed the former National Security Minister and co-founder of the UNP breakaway DUNF.

At an identification parade held on Thursday by the Presidential Commission inquiring into the deaths of Mr.Lalith Athulathmudali and General Kobbekaduwa, a technician who operated the sound system at the Kirilapone meeting addressed by Mr.Athulathmudali positively identified one **Priyankara Jayamanne alias Sudhu Mahathaya as the person who shot the DUNF leader.** The suspect is already in custody, police sources told the SUNDAY OBSERVER On the direction of the Commission, five suspects have been taken into custody in connection with the deaths of Mr.Athulathmudali and General Kobbekaduwa....

Witnesses at the identification parade have observed that the actual suspect Sudhu Mahaththaya has facial features similar to that of Ragunathan whose body was found at Mugalan Road after Mr.Athulathmudali's assassination. Ragunathan was earlier identified as the assassin. The new identification has been corroborated by Shalila Munasinghe, a personal aide of Mr.Athulathmudali, police said.

It is also suspected that recently murdered underworld gangster Chinthaka may have been killed because he was due to give further evidence before the Commission. It is suspected that the killing of another underworld figure, Baddaganne Prasanna, was also connected with the assassination of Mr.Athulathmudali.

The Commission has also been told that the CID and the Government Analyst's Department failed to carry out a thorough investigation following Mr.Athulathmudali's assassination.

Investigators now believe that the assassination of Mr.Athulathmudali General Kobbekaduwa and Navy Commander Clancy Fernando have been done by a certain political group.

Comment LTTE, THE CONVENIENT WHIPPING BOY

It is customary for all political commentators, Colombo journalists, foreign media, and other assorted academics to rush to put the blame on Tamil Tigers for every political killing that takes place. When TULF MPs V.Dharmalingam and Alalasundram were killled in Jaffna, it was concluded that the Tigers had done it. The truth came out later when it was found out that a TELO gang was responsible. When PLOT leader Uma Maheswaran was killed in Colombo, the immediate verdict was that the Tigers had done it. It did not take long to realise that it was the PLOT's own military wing that ordered the killing. When Jaffna University's Rajani Thiranagama was killed in Jaffna at a time when the Indian army and the EPRLF were in complete control, it suited everyone with an anti-LTTE animus to carry on a propaganda that the Tigers killed her. That fiction still persists. To every Tom, Dick and Harry, who had to make a living with the pen, the LTTE became the convenient whipping boy.It takes time for the Truth to come out, but by which time the damage is already done- It is worth noting that until now, not one killing ascribed to the Tigers has been PROVED.

The Sri Lankan Scene

Sri Lanka in the grip of a severe power crunch

COLOMBO, March 28 (Reuter) - Sri Lanka, currently in the grip of a severe power crunch, is offering special incentives to overseas investors who set up their own power generating units, the foreign investment agency said on Thursday.

``The Board of Investment will implement a special scheme to provide a 'once-and-for-all' payment of three million rupees (55,000 $) for BOI approved enterprises, provided one megawatt of new generating capacity is installed," a BOI statement said.

The board has earmarked 240 million rupees (4.4 million $) for payment to industrialists to install a maximum of 80 megawatts of power.

The enterprises are expected to work towards generating one megawatt through a single installation or through incremental units of 250 KVA (kilovolt amperes).

Sri Lanka introduced daily four-hour power cuts on March 22 after the failure of monsoons which feed hydropower reservoirs.

The Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB), the state-owned power utility, said on Wednesday the situation may worsen if energy consumption was not reduced.

The CEB said it was exploring the possibility of extending cuts ``or other strategies...to prevent a total blackout".

Though the intention was to save 2.5 million units a day through power cuts, only one million was being saved as consumers had adjusted their electricity use around the stoppage, it said.

``If this is allowed to continue, the country will be in total darkness from about April 28 until rains come somewhere in late May," it said in a statement.

Last month the CEB set aside 210 million rupees to encourage industry to generate its own power in a leasing arrangement with two development banks - Development Finance Corporation and National Development Bank.

Under this scheme, industries which import generators of 100 KVA and above were entitled to concessionary leasing rates and duty waivers.

The leases were available at 18 percent, which is about three percent lower than market rates, and repayable in two to four years. Fifty percent of import duty was waived immediately.

The balance was to be reimbursed once the CEB was satisfied the generator was being used to generate continuous power.

Bank officials said they had each leased about 45 generators ranging from 100 to 1,500 KVA under the scheme.

``Industrialists are keen on the scheme. The drawback is that the leasing line extends in to the next financial year, but the duty waiver stops at the end of the March 31, 1996, accounting year," said a bank official.

Sri Lanka has a power generation capacity of about 1,250 megawats, 80 percent of which comes from hydroelectric plants and the balance from diesel run plants.

No new power plants has been built in Sri Lanka in the past six years despite a steady 10 percent rise in demand for electricity every year, analysts said.

Sri Lanka is planning new thermal power plants to reduce dependence on hydropower, with foreign investors being invited to build two plants, CEB officials said. (1US $ = 54.30 rupees)

Mrs B. Cleared after 15 Years

COLOMBO (April 8) XINHUA - The Sri Lankan Parliament this evening passed a special legislation nullifying a 1980 resolution that deprived former and current Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike of civil rights for six years.

The legislation was tabled by Justice and Constitutional Affairs Minister G.L. Peiris this morning.

Opposition Leader and leader of the United National Party (UNP) Ranil Wickremesinghe led a walk out in parliament this morning as the debate on the resolution got under way.

In 1980, Mrs. Bandaranaike was found guilty by a special presidential commission for misuse and abuse of power and Parliament accordingly voted that she should be deprived of civil rights.

At that time, the resolution was passed by the UNP dominated parliament.

Mrs. Bandaranaike celebrated her 80th birth day on April 17.

The Sri Lankan Scene

SRI LANKA PROCLAIMS ALL ISLAND EMERGENCY

By NIRESH ELIATAMBY
Associated Press Writer

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP) — With the government still embroiled in a civil war against Tamil rebels, the president has proclaimed a nationwide state of emergency that gives her sweeping powers.

President Chandrika Kumaratunga's office said it had information that the guerrillas were "preparing to perpetrate acts of violence" during elections in June.

The state of emergency was imposed Thursday but announced only Monday.

The opposition criticized the move as an attempt to curb political activity.

"It's quite likely that the president wants to avoid the elections," said Jehan Perera, a columnist for the Island newspaper.

The June elections are for municipal and area councils nationwide. The vote, held every four years, had been scheduled for last June, but the government postponed it without giving any reason. Elections can be postponed again only if the legislature agrees to the state of emergency.

"With the civil war taking up much of her time and effort, she has not paid attention to the elections," Perra said. "She may be afraid that her party will lose them."

The state of emergency gives the military wide powers to arrest and jail suspects without trial. The president can also impose laws without parliamentary approval, curb press freedom and ban political meetings.

A state of emergency has remained in force in the entire country almost continuously since 1983, when the civil war broke out. Mrs. Kumaratunga retained it only in Colombo, the country's capital, and the war-torn north and east after she came to power in 1994. Her latest declaration reimposes it nationwide.

Parliament, which is controlled by Mrs. Kumaratunga's People's Alliance Party, must vote on her decree within 30 days.

"I don't see the need for extending or declaring emergency. Unless they feel they cannot win an election without the use of thuggery," said Ranil Wickramasinghe, the chief of the main opposition United National Party.

"A SINISTER ATTEMPT TO SUBVERT DEMOCRACY"

COLOMBO, April 10 (UPI) — Sri Lanka's main opposition party Wednesday lashed out at President Chandrika Kumaratunga for imposing a national state of emergency, calling the move an ``attempt to subvert democracy."

Kumaratunga said the measure would aid the government in quelling a 13-year guerrilla war against Tamil separatists, which has claimed more than 40,000 lives.

But the opposition United National Party opposes the measure and has accused Kumaratunga of abusing emergency provisions in the constitution to avoid holding local elections, which might turn against her United Front party.

The invocation of emergency rule ``appears to be an attempt to manipulate the system and not hold elections," a party spokesman said.

``We understand the need to maintain law and order but the current move of the government is a sinister attempt to subvert democracy," the spokesman said.

Unconstitutional, says Appeal Court

COLOMBO, March 27 (Reuter) - The Sri Lankan Court of Appeal ruled on Wednesday that two opposition-held provincial councils dissolved by the government in January were dismantled unconstitutionally, court sources said.

Provincial governors had dissolved the two councils in North-Central and neighbouring Sabaragamuwa on the instructions of the president, citing corruption and poor administration.

The court ruled that the governors were not empowered to dissolve the councils. The provinces have since been run by chief secretaries acting as de facto executive officers.

The ruling was seen causing political embarrassment for President Chandrika Kumaratunga and dealing a blow to the government ahead of local government elections expected in the next six months, analysts said.

■ The Sri Lankan Scene ■

Ex-Army chief charged with corruption

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's former army chief, General Hamilton Wanasinghe, was indicted Tuesday by the country's bribery commissioner on charges of bribery and corruption.

Wanasinghe had failed to explain how he earned 7.5 million rupees (US$140,187) when declaring his assets from 3 September 1993, to 30 September 1994, the time he served as defence secretary.

The bribery commissioner, Nelum Gamage, said in the indictment in the High Court that the 7.5 million rupees in cash and other assets had been acquired ``by way of bribes or by turning into cash material received as bribes."

Wanasinghe, a four star general, had headed the powerful Joint Operations Command (similar to the chairman of the US joint chiefs of staff) until 1993. He was army chief in 1990-91.

He had been appointed as defence secretary by President Dingiri Banda Wijetunga, and served until Sri Lanka's current president, Chandrika Kumaratunga, removed him.

Mrs Gamage told the court that Wanasinghe's regular income would not have allowed him to become so wealthy.

The commissioner listed 34 instances where illegally obtained money had been deposited in bank accounts in Sri Lanka or invested in a glass manufacturing company in his wife's name.

If he is convicted, Wanasinghe could be sentenced to up to seven years in prison and fined 5,000 rupees (US$93). The court also could confiscate any illegally obtained money and assets.

Under anti-bribery laws introduced by Mrs Kumaratunga's government, government officials must declare their assets.

Muslim trader accused of LTTE links

COLOMBO, April 8 (Xinhua)—The Sri Lankan police have arrested a multi-millionaire Muslim trader who is suspected to have had close connections with the Tamil rebels, police sources said today.

The Muslim trader has helped the rebels of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelem (LTTE) smuggle lethal bombs, arms and ammunition into Colombo to attack vital installations and VIPs, the sources said.

The Muslim trader is reported to have actively supported Tamil rebel leader Subramaniam Sivakumar who had been entrusted the job of transporting the bombs to Colombo from the north and to store them in safe houses and coordinating the attacks in Colombo.

Sivakumar whom the police want to arrest for a range of criminal activities has been able to escape to Singapore. A house he had purchased as a safe house in Colombo for 28,300 US Dollars has been located.

The book shops of the Muslim trader and his residence have been searched by the police, the sources added.

JVP emerging again after 25 years?

COLOMBO, April 4 (Reuter) - Disillusioned youth are again preaching revolution in Sri Lanka under the banner of a leftwing insurgent group whose abortive armed uprising rocked the island 25 years ago, former rebels and analysts said on Thursday.

Supporters of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP or People's Liberation Front) are trying to regroup in the island's deep south, a hotbed of insurgency, military officials said.

The JVP's insurrection in April 1971, whose 25th anniversary falls on Friday, was crushed by government forces who killed several thousand rebels and jailed their leaders. Many of the rebels were educated, unemployed youth.

"The JVP is now openly conducting indoctrination classes," former rebel Mahinda Wijesekera, now deputy minister of ports and shipping, told Reuters.

Army rowdyism near `Temple Trees'!

The Colombo Fort Magistrate Manilal Waidyatilleke issued warrants for the arrest of ten army personnel who were alleged to have assaulted and obstructed a duty police officer near "Temple Trees" on March 25, morning. "Temple Trees", the former Prime Ministerial residence now houses the President's office.

The Magistrate issued warrants for their arrest as they were not present in court when the case was called yesterday.

According to investigations conducted by the Kollupitiya police the army personnel were alleged to have obstructed the police constsable who was on duty near Temple Trees, threatening to kill him with a pistol, causing simple hurt and causing damage to government property.

Issuing warrants the Magistrate directed that the Kollupitiya police forward a further report on May 5.

LTTE likened to ANC & PLO

Canadian Thamils host international conference

The Federation of Associations of Canadian Thamils (FACT) hosted an International Conference on the Role of International Community in resolving the National Conflict in the Island of Ceylon in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. The conference which took place on March 23, 1996 at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) was attended by large number of Thamils and some non-Thamils as well.

The full day conference was organized to -

* Support the quest for peace in the Island of Ceylon(Sri Lanka);

* Discuss the legitimate aspirations of the Thamil people and the role of the LTTE; and

* Formulate recommendations for an effective international response;

Research Papers were presented by the following scholars-

Dr. Dagmar Hellmann Rajanayagam, South Asian Research Institute, Heidleberg, Germany, **Prof.Bruce Maththews,** Dept. of Comparative Religion, Acadia University, Nova Scotia, Canada., **Attorney Karen Parker,** Expert on Human Rights, California, USA, **Prof. Robert C.Oberst,** Dept.of Political Science, Nebraska Wesleyan University, **Prof. Chelvadurai Manogaran,** Dept.of International Studies, University of Wisconsin, USA, **Attorney Francis Boyle,** Expert in International Law New York, USA and **Prof. Peter Schalk,** Dept. of History & Religions, Uppsala University, Sweden

Mr. Francis Boyle, legal advisor to PLO and Bosnian Government and an expert on international law who gave evidence at the trial against Manickavasagam Suresh declared categorically that the people of Thamil Eelam have the right to self-determination under the U.N. Charter and under international law. Speaking further he said "Article 3 common to the four 1949 Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocol 1 of 1977 are international instruments applicable to situations of international armed conflicts involving the right to self-determination.

The LTTE has signed these instruments, thus gaining recognition as a National liberation movement and the status of privileged combatants in war. Because the LTTE is a signatory to the Additional Protocol 1, under no circumstances could anyone level the charge of "terrorism" against the LTTE. Canada has accepted the Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocol 1 as General Act of Parliament, and no Canadian court can hold the LTTE as a "terrorist Organization" or an "Organization engaged in Terrorism."

The Thamil people also have the right to bear arms and fight for self-determination in the face of oppression by the racist government of Sri Lanka. The British forced two separate states to unite and when they left, the government was a remnant of colonialism. The Thamil people are fighting a neo-colonial and a racist regime and the LTTE which is the vanguard force should be considered as a national liberation movement."

Mr. Boyle dismissed out of hand the charge that the LTTE is a terrorist organization. He compared the LTTE to the ANC and the PLO. " Both these organizations were at one time characterised as terrorist organizations by the government of the United States and Britain. But today every one in the White House is falling over each other to shake the hands of President Nelson Mandela and Yasser Arafat. These one time "terrorists" have also won the Nobel prizes for peace " Boyle said. Boyle's address was punctured with loud applause from the audience.

Ms. Karen Parker said "the discrimination against the Thamil people commenced before even the ink granting independence to Ceylon was hardly dried. The Thamil people struggle have come a long way where their claim to the right of self-determination is no more just an academic subject. As **a law student she was taught that when law is on your said argue the law, when facts are on your side argue the facts, but when both the law and the facts are not on your side just pound the table. This is exactly what the Sri Lankan government is doing now. The Sri Lankan government has neither the law nor the facts in its favour. Therefore, Chandrika Kumaratunga's government is just pounding the table."**

The panelists fielded questions from the audience and a lively discussion followed.

The following consensus emerged from the discussion -

That a political and peaceful resolution of the National conflict between the Thamil Nation and the Sinhala Nation should take into consideration the fact-

(i) The Thamil people because of their ethnicity, language, culture, history and territory constitute a Nation;

(ii) The Northern and Eastern provinces constitute the traditional homeland of the Thamil people;

(iii) The Thamil people are entitled to the right of self-determination under the United Nations Charter and International law; and

(iv) The LTTE is the legitimate and authentic leadership of the Thamil people.

(v) The Sri Lankan government should enter into meaningful negotiations with the LTTE under international mediation by countries like Canada, Norway, Sweden and Australia to resolve the National conflict for a lasting and just peace.

JAFFNA: HISTORIC EXODUS '95

and its military occupation

An inside report by

Rev.DR.S.J.Emmanuel

The night of Monday October 30 , 1995 was a black night in the entire history of the age-old city of Jaffna . Never has history witnessed such an exodus of fear and panic stricken people screaming and squeezing themselves out of the narrow roads and lanes of Jaffna. The nearly half a million population in and around the town was literally on the roads in pouring rain inching its way out of the densely populated town into the sparsely populated and ill -equipped suburban villages of Chavakachcheri, Kodikaman and Palai. It was for everyone a flight for survival.

Already as a result of military operations against the LTTE, the peninsula has experienced many waves of heavy displacements.

As soon as Eelam War II started in 1990, the army had forcibly occupied the villages of Mathagal, Ilavalai, Vasavilan and the islands of Mandaithivu, Kayts, Delft and Pooneryn. The people who fled the atrocities of that military occupation moved into Manipay, Sandilipay, Chunnakan and Killinochchi. The were living in sheds and tents without proper shelter; they have lost their means of livelihood (fishing) and the children were accommodated in make shift huts under some teachers. This situation had already continued for almost five years.

In the five months interval between the breakdown of talks between the government and LTTE on April 19, 1995 and the consequent commencement of an all out Sri Lanka attack on the Jaffna peninsula, a series of three displacements in quick succession were caused by three military operations.

After much planning and shopping for weapons from many countries around the world, the government heaped up nearly 40,000 troops with sophisticated weapons in about five large army camps around the peninsula to take over Jaffna.

The Sri Lankan army's first major operation in Eelam War III was "Leap Forward".

Besides the heavy death toll for the Armed Forces and the LTTE, the destruction of homes and the displacement of people from almost 78 square kilometres of the Peninsula, Jaffna town witnessed the second wave of displacement from Valigamam West and its peripheries to the centre of the Peninsula.

Although the LTTE pushed back the forces and reclaimed the territory with their "Leap Forward" operation, the army kept threatening the population from their Palaly Base with long-range artillery shells. And with limited operation like the "Shake Hands" the people didn't have the courage to go back to their badly destroyed homes for fear of land mines.

Soon afterwards in a bid to extend the Air Base at Palali to suit the landing of planes with the monsoonal change in the direction of winds, operation Lightnin Thunder started moving in the directio of Atchuvely. This brought in a thir wave of displaced people into the Jaffn area.

The newly occupied area of the arm around Atchuvely, Urumpirai the rich re soil region of Jaffna which produce good fruits and vegetables for the peninsula. The people who were chased by th shelling and bombing had to leave behin all their fruits of labour to the forces an flee.

The Jaffna population, now swolle by many waves of displacements, wa already experiencing heavy shortages o fish, vegetables and plantains and drive further into malnourishment. Above al these, the shortages caused by the inhuman embargo of the government o essentials for life and the army occupation of Tamil areas with vegetables an fruits, there hang over the dense population of residents and refugees in Jaffna the dark clouds of an imminent majo military operation to capture Jaffna wit repeated reminders by artillery shelling.

Operation Riviresa, the final for the take over of Jaffna, commenced on October 17, 1995 under a cloudy weather with signs of imminent monsoonal showers,. Day and night it thundered, shuddered and the people trembled and shivered.

The whole peninsula was vibrating day and night with the tremors of aerial bombs and shells, which were directed to scare and drive away the people from the approaching State Forces. Hence they were falling far beyond the combatant area of Atchuvely, Neervely and Kopay into the densely populated towns of Jaffna.

How could the population survive such an aerial attack and wait for their "liberators"?

Having learnt many useful lessons from the experiences of the IPKF taking over Jaffna against the LTTE of 1987, this Operation by the Sri Lankan Forces started after many weeks of intense military planning and preparation (very probably with the help and cooperation of the Indian Forces who already had a good knowledge of the Jaffna terrain).

The approaching sounds and tremors sent a cold and frightening message into the heart of the Jaffna population, that was fast becoming a dense dungeon overflowing with three waves of refugees from the peripheral villages. The message was fatal. It read:- The Sri Lankan Army is poised for a destructive but definitive take-over of Jaffna !

In short, with nearly forty thousand troops and tanks and modern weapons of destruction surrounding them, the population of Jaffna, shrunk with fear and hopelessness, was summoning utmost courage to face the ordeal of a final encounter. If the intended take-over was to be a direct confrontation on land, then the people could have to some extent relied on the defensive and protective strength of the LTTE. **But the Army movement towards Jaffna was, preceded for many miles ahead by indiscriminate shelling and aerial bombing.**

The State Forces "coming to liberate Jaffna and the Tamils from the clutches of the LTTE" were not approaching them with a bouquet of suthu nelum (white lotus) for the people of Jaffna, but with a rain of lethal weapons over them. **The world has still to learn from the Sri Lankan forces how to liberate a people by showering lethal weapons on them!**

The Sri Lankan government may have succeeded in convincing the world that this war was a war for peace and not a war against the Tamils, but the people of the North knew by bitter experience of forty years of death and destruction what the State Forces were up to.

Day by Day they followed the advancement of the Riviresa and on the eve of October 30, 1995, the warning was made and it was a necessary one: The State Forces are approaching the town of Jaffna and the Tigers will fight tooth and nail to defend it. It was advisable to move to safer areas of Thenmaraadchy.

This was enough to move a whole population into a panic-stricken exodus. There were no forcing or threats from the LTTE as made out by some anti-LTTE persons living far away from the North.

Surprised by the massive exodus from Jaffna, the Sinhalese and Tamil supporters of the Government, started shedding crocodile tears for the Tamils.

They first accused the LTTE of having forced the people out from Jaffna at gun-point. Then they turned round in favour of the Government and said that the Armed Forces gave wise instructions to the people to move out of the war zone.

Naturally those who live away from Jaffna do not hear the shells nor see the bombs, they only see Tigers in Jaffna and do not hesitate to tell contradicting lies so as to discredit the LTTE.

When there is a fatal threat to life, it is the dangers to life and even help people to move out of the danger zone. This is what the LTTE did on the days around November 30, 1995. It is true that this sudden exodus for safety caused much hardships, especially for the old and the sick, and deprived many of taking their belongings.

Because the Tigers were successful in delaying the army-advance near Kopay, the civilians were allowed, and even helped with vehicles in the case of transferring the sick and the aged to re-enter Jaffna and recover some essentials. Many made use of the first week of November to re-enter Jaffna and collect a few more belongings while others were not able for a reasonable fear and high cost of transport.

A warning given to flee away from danger and a help-given in the orderly and safe removal of certain belongings from Jaffna should not be mischievously construed as "forcing the people to flight at gun point"

The attempt of a few hundred thousand people with their belongings rushing to go through the one and only exit - bridge at Navatkuli was almost like the biblical camel attempting to go through the eye of a needle! But, thanks to the street-discipline maintained by the LTTE-Police Force, it went through!

With the coalescing of all the previous waves of displacements, the historic exodus from Jaffna, fleeing the threat of the Sri Lankan Army atrocities during that fateful night of October 30,1995, alone reached an unbelievable 300,000 civilians.

The monsoonal rains were beating hard on their faces, sweat and tears could not be seen. They were drenched, not so much by the night rains, but in the sorrows and pains of leaving their citadel of Jaffna. They were like those rushing out of a house on fire, but not screaming in fear nor yelling in anger. It was a serious and sorrowful rush for survival, slowed down only by massive size of the crowd and the bad roads.

The panic and fear stricken population evacuating the city was forced to slow down as it approached the 6 feet narrow neck of the town - the Navatkuli bridge. Here they were literally trying to inch their way out of the danger zone. They were moving out, but the destiny was still undecided. They had no choice between life and death. For survival, they said, let us move out, as quickly as possible and with the maximum that we could carry in our hands, or on a cycle, or in a shared tractor or a kerosene van.

But once they passed out of the Navatkuli bridge, a short sigh of relief, of having come beyond the dangerous zone, and the journey continues. The biggest question of survival was now "where are we to seek shelter?"

While standing for hours in the rains in that long queue towards some unknown destiny in the Thenmaradchy and Vadamaradchy districts, babies cried for food and the drink, vehicles impatiently tooted their horns but all the others were deep in their silence of sadness.

Almost about 15 people of all ages in a row of bicycles or kerosene-powered motor cycles, each loaded with at least two bags of personal belongings on the carrier, an elderly mother, father or a baby on the bar or seat before the rider - this was one pattern of travelling.

Another was with kerosene-oil powered tractors loaded with people as well as a variety of things, mats, pillows, kerosene oil lamps, cooking utensils, domestic pets, some-food-stuff etc.

A third pattern was that of the wealthy and the aged with an old A-40 car running on kerosene filled with one or two families - their belongings loaded in an open dicky and on the hood-carrier. In between all these modes of transport, walked the poor with a few plastic bags of belongings and their little ones - half naked and a goat or two - all drenched in the rains.

Even this inching out in the rains came to a grinding halt with every flat-tyred lorry or a heavily loaded tractor turning off the track. Between 5.30 p.m. on Monday and 5.00 a.m. on Tuesday three babies had died through stampede and a pregnant mother gave birth on the road. Hundreds of old people crossed the bridge but did not survive long.

There was not a single good hospital outside the Jaffna town to cater to the thousands who suffered. Chavakachcheri and Manthikai hospitals were too small and ill equipped to cater even to a few hundreds.

The pathetic exodus of the people carried the inhuman marks of the cruelty inflicted for a long time by many of the anti-Tamil measures taken by successive governments, especially of the present one.

The inhuman economic embargo enforced by the government on the people, reduced them to primitive forms of life and the embargo on fuel and closure of the peninsula made all petrol fuelled vehicles disappear out of Jaffna - only kerosene fuelled motor cycles and old cars were available for transport.

Thus the last thirteen years of war have shattered not only the general quality of life of people, without communication and without transport but also reduced many of them to their skins and bones without the energy to do that long trek.

Those who had some relatives or friends on this side of the bridge made a bee-line to those houses for refuge. But to each house in Thenmaradchy and Vadamaradchy came not just one relative or friend from Valikamam. There were several knocking on the doors for help.

Those who rushed for help claimed different degrees of relationship and friendship with the hosts. Sri Lankans in general, and Jaffna Tamils in particular, cultivate an "enlarged family relation-

Refugees in their own land!

ship" which includes third and fourth degree relations.

Further, unlike the distinction between a very small circular of friends and a larger circle of known people as in some western countries, in Sri Lanka almost everyone, once met and shortly spoken to, is referred to as a friend. And in time of need, these wider relationships are very useful and made best use of. Hence almost every house in Thenmaradchy received guests without prior notice and had to host at least five to six families of instant refugees. Those who knew no one in these regions went to temples, churches and schools. In the temples and churches, no place was too sacred to be reserved for the divine. Even the presbyteries (houses for priests) and convents (houses for religious nuns) were overflowing with priests and nuns respectively.

The poorest of the poor were still left on the roadside, under trees, in old and dilapidated bus stands and railway stations unused for almost a decade. (The Sri Lankan Railway and Transport Services have no services in the North for over a decades).

A sudden and massive influx of refugees from the Valikamam urban areas into the sandy suburban areas of Thenmaradchy with very limited facilities posed a huge human problem. Besides the inclement weather, the dewy nights, the food shortages, problems of sanitation, shelter, medicines, etc. there was the absence of organizational structures to meet such a sudden and heavy demand. But with cooperation from all the sides, the impossible ceased to be so.

It is to the credit of the LTTE that within two days their Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation (TRO) with the assistance of the GAS, NGOs and religious organisations set up a network of services to cater to the very minimum needs of such a massive population:- cadjan sheds to protect the people from the rains, tube wells at crowded centres, toilet ditches, distribution of clothes, mats and sheets, dry rations and cooked food etc.

Without a single hospital with reasonable facilities like sufficient medicines, drugs, antibiotics, lab facilities and operation theatre facilities, the biggest problem was the sanitary threat to the survival of the refugees. And that too was solved satisfactorily within a week.

Unashamedly, the government was unwilling to accept the reality of this mass exodus by giving false statistics to local and foreign media (only 100,000 displaced!).

They were reluctant to recognize the displaced as refugees because they have not crossed over the national borders. On this count it was even undermining the appeal made by the Secretary -General of the United Nations for international help to aid the half a million "refugees".

Aid delayed was aid denied and thousands succumbed to the hunger, thirst, inclement weather, sickness etc.

The growing restrictions imposed by the government on the flow of food, medicines and other essential items for life, the restrictions on the NGOs in not allowing their instruments of communication, the restrictions on media and prohibition of journalists to the North, and the continued attacks on the displaced population are causing the slow death of the Tamil population in exile.

Already three months have elapsed since the military occupied Jaffna and chased out the population. The world has neither known the whole truth of this exodus and massive suffering nor has any government condemned the action of the Sri Lankan government for its military action.

The world is quick to condemn violence but reluctant to search out and treat the cause for violence.

SRI LANKAN WAR ON THE TAMILS: MARCH'96 DIARY

Police rampage in the East

On March 2, the members of the Sri Lankan police went on a rampage in Valaichenai in the East. The forces forcefully entered the homes of Tamil families living in Vipulananda Road in Valaichenai and smashed their TV sets, Radios, other valuables, and furniture that were there. Their belongings were thrown on the road by the forces. Ten Tamil families were badly affected in this Sri Lankan police outrage.

More restrictions on travel

Under the old rule, a person living in Colombo should stand surety for the good conduct of a Tamil person who wishes to travel to Colombo. The person standing surety should himself possess a registration certificate issued by his area police station in Colombo. The surety will have to travel to Vavuniya (approx. 150 miles) to identify himself and to take charge of the Tamil person travelling to Colombo. The new rule states that in addition to satisfying all the above conditions, the surety will now also have to be a voter in Colombo and his name should appear in the Colombo electoral list. It should be noted that the majority of Tamils living in Colombo do not vote in Colombo as they normally choose to vote in their homeland in the North and East and their names will also not appear in any Colombo Electoral list.

Arbitrary arrest of farmers

On 6th March, the Sri Lankan armed forces went around the farming villages of Galela and Mannampiti in the Polonaruwa district in the East and arbitrarily arrested 98 Tamil farmers including 7 women. They have been taken away for questioning and have not been released or charged.

Tamil villages Shelled

On 7th, Gunboats belonging to the Sri Lankan navy, shelled the Tamil coastal villages all along the coast of Mullaitivu in the East. The worst hit were the tiny coastal villages in the Mullivaikal area. The panic stricken villagers abandoned their homes and retreated to the interior out of reach of the range of the Naval guns. Casualty details are not known.

Fishing boats attacked

On 8th March in the night at about 10.30 PM, in one of its worst attacks, the Sri Lankan naval gun boats opened fire on fishing vessels belonging to Tamil fishermen that were fishing at sea off the coast of Iranaimadu which lies in the little islands that lay dotted in the sea to the East of the Jaffna peninsula. Five fishing boats together with their valuable fishing gear were sunk by the Navy. A fifty five year old fisherman who is a refugee from one of the nearby Little Islands of Pungudutivu has been killed in the shooting. Six other fishermen including a father and son are missing. It is now feared that they may also have been killed.

Tamil woman (45) raped

A 45 year old Tamil married woman from the village of Mailankarachchi in Valaichenai in the East was raped by two Sri Lankan Soldiers who were stationed at the nearby Sri Lankan army camp at Valaichenai. The Sri Lankan Soldiers who committed this crime forced their way into her cottage when she was alone, while her husband and children were away. The distressed woman was admitted to the Batticaloa Government hospital.

Eastern village bombed

On 11th March in a joint operation against the Tamil villages in the East, the Sri Lankan air force fighter planes dropped bombs on the Tamil residential areas in and around Vellaveli while the Sri Lankan military forces rounded up the surrounding farming villages. The Sri Lankan military sources claimed that LTTE camps or positions were attacked while the innocent Tamil civilians abandoned their homes and fled in fear.

Racist cry by Sinhala parents

Sinhala parents have strongly objected to Tamil parents joining the Parent - Teacher advisory bodies of the Schools in the South in which both Sinhalese and Tamil students study. The names of many Tamil parents have been removed from the various Parent - Teachers advisory bodies in the South as a result of the protests that were made by the Sinhala parents. Members belonging to these bodies serve in an honorary capacity only and do not receive any salary for their services.

Army cuts off lagoon link

The Sri Lankan armed forces in a new repressive measure against the Tamils in the East, have now banned the travel of people in the Batticaloa lagoon. This stretch of water which is the vital link that connects the villages of Manmunai, Muthalaikuda, Kurumanveli, Mandoor, Kurukkalmadam and Ampalanthurai with the mainland Batticaloa on the other side of the Lagoon. This has caused severe hardship to the Tamil people who live in these areas. The Sri Lankan Military sources have claimed that these are security measures.

Shelling from Palaly camp

On 12th March, the Sri Lankan armed forces stationed at the Palaly military camp again launched artillery shell attacks on the villages of Kerudavil, Thondamanaru in Vadamaratchi. Artillery shells rained in on the villages during the attack which started at 8.30 AM and continued non stop till 11.30 AM. Many houses and properties were damaged.

Vakarai area in East shelled

Sri Lankan armed forces stationed at the nearby army camp at Karadikulam have renewed their shell attack on the Tamil area of Vakarai in the East. The current programme of shelling of this residential area started on 12-03-1996

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and is still continuing. Kalipillai Samithamby a 34 year old mother of 6 young children was killed on the spot when an artillery shell exploded near her home in Vakarai. Many people have been wounded and their houses and property have been damaged.

Rice mill workers detained

On 12th March, the Matale police carried out a massive search operation in the Dambulla area in the Central province in the South. The search was concentrated in looking for Tamil youths of Indian origin who were working in the rice mills that are scattered all around the area. The Sri Lankan police arbitrarily arrested 137 Tamil youths all of Indian origin from 20 rice mills in the area which they searched during the day. Later, the police released 19 youths while the rest were produced before the Magistrate in the Kandy courts who ordered that they all be kept in Kandy till the 25 of March when their detention will be reviewed again.

Fact finding mission flees

A Fact finding mission composed of Citizens committee members and led by a government officer - the Principal Secretary of the North-East provincial council, which went to the Kinniyady village in Batticaloa district to look into human rights violations, vacated the area in panic, as the Sri Lankan armed forces threatened to shoot them down. The Tamil village of Kinniyady in the Batticaloa district has been destroyed recently and most of the residents have fled the area when the armed forces went on a rampage looting properties and burning the houses.

Public transport collapses

The public transport system has collapsed in Valaichenai as the Sri Lankan armed forces have taken over all the district's new buses. The old buses that now remain with the Transport authorities are breaking down all the time as they are in need of urgent repair and are not road worthy. The situation is further compounded by the fact that the passengers would also have to get down several times at the increasing number of check points and walk long distances be they young or old.

Fate of boys unknown

The fate of 6 young boys arrested by the Sri Lankan armed forces in Sithandy and surrounding areas in the East is still not known. The armed forces are refusing to give any information about them or even issue certificates that the boys are held by them. According to the human rights code of practice, the armed forces are obliged to supply information of all arrests and issue certificates to the relatives of those arrested. But the Sri Lankan armed forces who operate in the North and East do not comply with this human rights requirement. Tamil people are also afraid to ask any information of arrests from the Sri Lankan armed forces in the North and East as they normally have a habit of arresting even the people who go to their army camp seeking information of arrests.

Fuel shortage in Batticaloa

There is an acute shortage of fuel in the Batticaloa district as the Sri Lankan armed forces are refusing to issue permits for the transportation of fuel to this area. Mile long queues are quite common at the petrol stations, many of which are not opening due to lack of fuel stock. Prices for the little available fuel has soared high and black marketing in fuel has become wide spread.

Children killed by shelling

Children who were working in the fields in Puthureddy area in Batticaloa district were the target of Sri Lankan army's shell attack. Two children Ravichandran age 10 and Navindrarajah age 12 were killed on the spot due to this attack and two others were seriously injured. The injured children were admitted to the Batticaloa hospital and doctors say that their chances of survival from this severe injuries are very remote.

Amnesty refused permission

Amnesty international has been forced to cancel its visit to the Batticaloa district. Representatives of the Amnesty International who are now in Colombo have not been permitted by the Sri Lankan Defence Ministry to visit the Batticaloa district where the Sri Lankan armed forces are currently engaged in a military operation in which many Tamil people have been injured, killed or arrested. The representatives of the Amnesty international had made preparations to stay in the Batticaloa district for 3 days beginning from the 12th of this month and had planned to meet the Government officers, Heads of International relief agencies and others during their visit to the district.

Heavy shelling in North

On 16th March, Sri Lankan artillery shells rained down on several areas in Vadamaratchi and Thenmaratchi districts. Throughout the day starting form early morning till late at night, the Sri Lankan armed forces stationed at the military camps at Palali to the north, Valigamam to the North East and Elephant pass to South, jointly fired barrages of artillery shells into several Tamil villages in the district. Until now, a heavy joint attack like this has not happened in this area, this year.

The Thanankilapu and Arukuveli coastal areas of Thenmaratchi took a heavy beating. A small baby died in the arms of her parents while they themselves were injured. The house belonging to Praramanabham Mahesan collapsed while Mahesan escaped with minor injuries. The residential areas of Navatkuli, Kaithady, Mirusuvil North, Kudamiyan Karuddai, Eluthumadduval, Pallai, Nagarkoil, Masar, Puthukadu, Mamunai in the North were heavily shelled. The village of Udupiddy in Vadamaratchi was very severely affected. Sooran Satkunam age 50 and Srienanthan Siva

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Tharsani who is a 05 year old baby were critically wounded when artillery shells landed on their house in Udupiddy North.

Army occupied areas bombed

On 16th March, in an unprecedented move, the Sri Lankan supersonic attack aircrafts dropped bombs on the army occupied areas of Puthur, Avarankal and Atchuveli. The reason for this curious attack is not immediately clear. The details of damage are not available.

Refugees flee Nachchikuda

Inhabitants of Nachchikuda in Mannar vacates the area in a hurry expecting a repeat attack by the Sri Lankan Airforce. 60 Families who were living as refugees in Nachchikuda in Mannar have now fled their homes and have taken refuge in the nearby Kumulamunai church after their refugee settlement was brutally attacked by two Sri Lankan MI 24 military helicopters at about 4.40 AM on 16-03-1996 which left 16 dead and 60 seriously wounded.

172 families displaced from the army occupied Valigamam and the islands off Jaffna peninsula are settled in Nachchikuda in Mannar. The whole community is in deep shock after the helicopter attack. The Assistant Government agent R. Ravindran, has asked the two village headmen of the area to survey the damages and to provide food and shelter to the affected people. Most of the huts in which the people lived have been burnt down by rocket fire and new shelters have to be provided for the homeless. The two village headmen are making arrangements to provide cooked food to the people while many families are making preparations in a hurry to vacate the area expecting a repeat attack on their homes by the Sri Lankan airforce.

Napalm bombs used

Government officers from Kilinochchi who visited the coastal area of Nachchikudda in Mannar that was attacked by two Sri Lankan Military helicopter gunships in the darkness at about 4.30 AM on 16-02-1996 said "it was like a crematorium". The whole area is devastated by the brutal inhuman attack of the two MI 24 Helicopter gunships. The trees that was growing there, the huts, the fishing equipments and everything else have all been burnt down. Nothing living is found there now. An area of approximately one and a half square kilometres presents a scene that is shown only in war films. Obviously Napalm bombs had been used to burn down such a vast area, said the officers who visited the scene.

The Government officers issued the names of those who died in the Helicopter attack. Almost all of them were people displaced from the coastal areas of Jaffna who were temporarily living in Nachchikuda and were engaged in fishing. The affected people had earlier fled Jaffna when their homes came under military attack during the time the Sri Lankan armed forces launched a military offensive to capture Jaffna from October 1995 to December 1995.

10 Tamils villagers arrested

During the night of 17 March Sri Lankan soldiers from the Vavuniya army camp entered the neighbouring village of Semamadu and arrested ten Tamils villagers for no apparent reason. They all have been taken to Vavuniya army camp and are still in army custody.

Ambulance also detained

At a time when Mullaitivu Government Agent Mr. Tharmakulasingam is making repeated appeals to the Sri Lankan Health Ministry for an additional ambulance vehicle the Mullaitivu hospital has suffered another heavy blow. The only ambulance vehicle of the Mullaitivu hospital was refused permission by the Sri Lankan army to return to Mullaitivu from Vavuniya. This ambulance recently went into the army controlled area of Vavuniya district with some patients but Captain Jeyakody of Vavuniya army camp has refused permission for the vehicle to return on the ground that the motor license for the year 1996 had not been obtained. It is worth noting that the Government Agent of Mullaitivu has applied for this license well in time but he hasn't received the necessary documents for license from the government yet. He is now trying to get this ambulance vehicle released by the army.

Retaliation on civilian areas

One 76 year old woman was killed and 4 people including two children were seriously wounded on 18 March when Sri Lankan army stationed in Valigamam (Jaffna district) rained down artillery shells towards Vadamaratchi and Thenmaratchi areas of Jaffna district. Civilian areas of Valvettithurai (in Vadamaratchi), Navatkuli and Kaithady (in Thenmaratchi) were badly affected by these indiscriminate artillery shell attacks. Details of other casualties to the civilians are not known yet. It seems that these indiscriminate artillery shell attacks on civilian targets were carried out by the army in retaliation to the successful land mine attack on an army vehicle by the LTTE forces within the army controlled Valigamam area of Jaffna district. when 18 Sri Lankan soldiers were killed.

Soldiers abduct women

Abduction of young women by the Sri Lankan soldiers has become too common in Batticaloa district. Gangs of Sri Lankan soldiers enter the Tamil villages at night, abduct young women and subject them to severe sexual assaults. Several incidents of abduction and rape have occurred in the villages of Kommanthurai, Chiththandy, Santhively Valaichenai and Thiyavaddavan in Batticaloa district. On 07-03-1996, 5 young women were gang raped by a group of Sri Lankan soldiers in Thiyavaddavan. After a complaint was made by the victims at Magistrates cour in Batticaloa an identification parade was held and 4 Sri Lankan soldiers were identified among 64 soldiers. Apart from rapes, theft of valuables and deliberate destruction of properties by the army are also on the increase. In Batticaloa district discipline among the Sri Lankan soldiers had now reached to an all time low.

Farm workers disappear

The whereabouts of the 12 young Tamil labourers arrested by the Welikantha police in Porathivu, Batticaloa district on 15-03-1996 remain as a mystery. After inquiries have been made by relatives of these farm workers at Welikantha police they were informed that all 12 have been handed over to the Aralanakal police for further inquiries. But when Aralanakal police was approached they stated that they do not have such persons in their custody and no such persons have been handed over to them by anyone. This is the typical method used by the Sri Lankan police in Batticaloa district to carry out extra judicial executions and people fear that the above 12 may be the latest in the long lists of over 10, 000 disappeared in Batticaloa district.

Annai Poopathy remembered

Tamil heroine (Mother) Annai Poopathy was remembered with prayers and in secret gatherings in the villages of Nasivantheevu and Mailayankarachchi in Batticaloa after the Sri Lankan armed forces pulled down the specially erected enclosures and violently dispersed the people who gathered for a public meeting to honour Annai Poopathy. The armed forces also arrested Nalliah Easwaran a father of three children, who had come for the commemoration.

Annai Poopathy fasted until death, fighting for the democratic rights of the Tamil people in April 1988. She is a great woman from the village of Kiran in the Batticaloa district. She started her fast on 19-03-1988 and continued it until her death on 19-04-1988. Commemoration days are held each year in all parts of Tamil Eelam to remember and to honour her for the great sacrifice she made for her motherland.

French doctors are helpless

The resident French doctors from Medicine Sans Frontiers (MSF) have informed the Killinochchi health authorities that their stay in the Killinochchi hospital is pointless without surgical equipments. At present patients in need of surgical care are taken to the Vavuniya hospital through Thandikulam Sri Lankan military check point and soldiers manning this military check point do not permit these transfer of patients that easily. MSF doctors have said that they do not want to stay idle in Killinochchi without performing the operations which are urgently needed. It will be a tremendous loss to the Tamil people if these MSF doctors are to leave Killinochchi. The Killinochchi hospital is already struggling to cope with large numbers of patients specially after the arrival of refugees from Valigamam.

Priest beaten up

A Minister of the Methodist Church was severely beaten by the Sri Lankan army officers at Thandikulam check point in Vavuniya district. He was picked up by the Sri Lankan army while bringing 300,000 Rupees in both cash and cheque to renew the tenancy agreement of the Church in the North. He showed documentary evidence to prove to the army officers the manner in which this money is to be spent. But the army officers refused to listen to him, severely beat him and ordered him to deposit the money in a bank in Vavuniya. An angry army officer tore up the cheque into small pieces, threw them on the floor and ordered the Minister to pick up those pieces. It is worth noting that this assault took place on this Minister of the Methodist Church while he was dressed in religious attire.

Government snubs FAO

The Sri Lankan Government has declined to meet the recommendations of the representatives of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) to increase the weekly quota of dry rations to the Tamil refugees in Vanni the Tamil mainland. The Government has cited the lack of funds as its excuse.

Representatives of the FAO who visited Kilinochchi were not satisfied amongst other things, over the small quantity of dry rations that were being supplied to the Tamil refugees living in Vanni. Hence their recommendation to the Government in Colombo to increase the weekly quota.

End of Tamil medium

The last and the only remaining Tamil school in Amparai has ceased to offer education in Tamil Medium with the appointment of a Sinhala Principal from 1995 after transferring the Tamil Principal of the school. With this, the facilities for education in Tamil medium has sadly come to an end in Amparai District.

Of the 270 Schools found in the Amparai district, 182 schools are reserved exclusively for Sinhala students while about 80 schools are for the education of Muslim students. In 1954 there were 20 Tamil schools in the Amparai district. Some of these Tamil schools have since been taken over by the army and have been converted as Army camps while the remaining Tamil schools were taken over for use by the Sinhala students.

Vagrant life for Tamil families

All 25 Tamil families who live in the village of Thiyavadduvan near Valaichenai in the Eastern Province have started going to the neighbouring village of Nasivantheevu to sleep at night after the Sri Lankan army started harassing them in the dusk and in the night when they patrol the village. In the morning they return to their village to tender their crops and work in their fields. This has become a very common practice amongst the Tamil villagers who live close to the Sri Lankan army camps in the Eastern Province.

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PLOTE demands tax

The issue of essential items to the displaced people now resident in Killinochchi district has come to a halt. This is due to the hold up of lorries bringing the essential items to the North at Thandikulam check point in Vavuniya. Armed members of PLOTE, a Tamil Parliamentary group working for the armed forces at military check points in Vavuniya, are demanding a payment of Rs 3000 for themselves from each lorry that carries essential food stuffs to the Tamil people in Mannar, Mullaitivu and Killinochchi districts. As these lorries are running under contracts with the Sri Lankan government it is the government which has to pay this ransom or persuade the PLOTE to give up its demand. But the Commissioner of Essential Services who is the highest authority in this area and the Minister for refugees, relief and rehabilitation have refused to take responsibility for this matter. In a surprise, move they instructed the government agents of Mannar, Mullaitivu and Killinochchi to go for a settlement with the PLOTE group. The government agents have already pointed out that there is no financial provision available under existing treasury regulations for the payment of such ransom.

Class rooms destroyed

On 26 March, a Sri Lankan supersonic fighter plane bombed the coastal areas of Vadamaratchi at about 9.40 AM. Several bombs hit the village of Kerudavil. Two elderly people were critically wounded and Pathmini a 15 year old young girl was seriously injured when a bomb hit their house and reduced it to a rubble. All three have been admitted to the Manthikai hospital near Point Pedro. The condition of the two elderly people is extremely critical and it is feared that they may not survive.

Throughout the day, in a parallel attack which started from 4 AM in the early morning, the Sri Lankan armed forces fired barrages of artillery and mortar shells over a wide area of the thickly populated Vadamaratchi and Thenmaratchi districts. Many shells hit the Chavakachcheri Ladies college. Several class rooms in the college were destroyed.

Govt. denies funds

In spite of the several pleas from the Government Agent, the Sri Lankan government has refused to release funds (cash) for the running of Kilinochchi district in the Vanni Tamil mainland. The Sri Lankan government's first quarter allocation for the district for the year is Rupees 145 Million. So far the Government has only released 20 Million Rupees of funds while payments for the year gone (Year 1995) have still not been made and are still in serious arrears. As a consequence, the Kilinochchi Government Agents office is in a financial crisis. The office has not even paid for the essential services in the district. The supply of essential food items to the large number of refugees in the district are also in serious jeopardy. Though these issues have all been raised by the Kilinochchi Government Agent in his letters, the Government in Colombo has so far not even sent a reply.

Tamil patients barred

The overall commander in charge of the Sri Lankan armed forces in Eastern province, has ordered that Tamil patients from the Batticaloa district in the Eastern province should not be permitted to go to the hospitals in Colombo for further treatment which the hospitals in Batticaloa district are unable to offer. The commander who is conducting a war against the Tamil people in the East, has instructed his soldiers who man the various checkpoints not to permit any patients to pass through unless they possess his written permission.

Many Tamil patients in Batticaloa district want to go to the hospitals in Colombo to get proper treatment as there is an acute shortage of medicine in the hospitals in Batticaloa district. This is due to the armed forces not permitting any medical supplies to get through to the hospitals in the district where they are conducting a war. Further the hospitals, mostly have only old and out of date surgical equipments that cannot be used effectively, even for any ordinary surgical operations.

Hill country Tamils jailed

33 hill country Tamils who were arrested on 12th March while working in the rice mills in Dambulla in the Central province, have not been released. On 12-03-1996, the Dambulla police went round on a search operation looking for upcountry Tamil youths in Matale district and arrested 118 of them while they were working in the rice mills. They were all detained in the Kandy jail. Recently they were produced before the Dambulla magistrate who ordered that 85 of them be released and the remaining 33 be kept in the Kandy jail pending further inquiry.

Hindu temple destroyed

On 23rd March, the Sri Lankan armed forces stationed at the Palaly, Valigamam and Elephant pass army camps jointly shelled the villages in Vadamaratchi and Thenmaratchi continuously, from about 2 a.m. in the early morning till late evening. The villages of Vatharawathai and Madduvil North in Thenmaratchi and the villages of Thondamanaru and Valvettiturai in Vadamaratchi were badly affected. At Valvettiturai a Hindu temple and a house were destroyed in the shelling.

Mullaitivu bombed

On 31st March, in the early morning, two Israeli built Kfir fighter planes bombed the residential areas of Mullaitivu. The fighters flew over the district in their bombing mission with such a tremendous roar, it instilled a terrific fear and caused panic amongst the villagers who are mostly farmers. Damages caused in this bombing have not been assessed.

Criteria for a solution

Visuvanathan Rudrakumaran

Full text of the Paper presented at the conference on Conflict in Sri Lanka and International Response at the Christian Michelsens Institute, Bergen, Norway, February 26, 1996.

Distinguished Panelists, Honoured Guests, Thank you for inviting me to speak here this morning. It is a pleasure to be attending this seminar organized by the Norwegian Govt., the Christian Michelsen Institute and the All Party solidarity Group.

Norway is well known for its neutrality in international relations. Mr. Christian Michelsen is the first prime minister of Norway and the founder of the Christian Michelsen Institute. He played an important role in the peaceful secession of Norway from Sweden. As we are all aware, the recent escalation of violence on the island of Sri Lanka has caused great dismay and alarm. **The mounting loss of innocent lives, resulting from the Navaly Church bombing, the Nagarkovil School bombing, "Operation Sunshine", the Colombo bank bombing and the Kumarapuram massacre among many tragedies, has demonstrated that the strategy of "peace through war" is not only untenable but immoral.** As the United Nations secretary-General pointed out in his statement issued on the first of February 1996, the bombing incident in Colombo highlights "the need to find an early negotiated political solution to the conflict in Sri Lanka". Any lasting resolution of the conflict has to be based on the real situation in the Island of Sri Lanka. The response of the Tamil people after the politics of exclusion by all Sinhala Governments since Independence is a realization that their lives and their interests only be protected by collectively asserting their aspirations in the form of nationhood. In the last democratic elections held in 1977, the Tamils voted for an independent state for Tamils. Since then they have not only asserted their right to nationhood, but have paid for it, and are still paying for it in blood, toil, sweat and tears.

Conflict resolution should be based on such values as human dignity, respect for humanity and equality, among others. Unfortunately, in Sri Lanka one of the parties to the conflict, the Sinhala establishment as represented by the Sri Lankan Government, persistently denies these values when dealing with the other party to the conflict: the Tamil nation represented by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (or LTTE).

The brutalisation and alienation of the Tamil Nation by the oppressive Sinhala governments is much older than the LTTE

The characterisation of the Tamil Nation's striving to be responsible for its own affairs and to take its destiny in its own hands as a "Terrorist Problem" is an implicit yet nonetheless glaring denial of the dignity of the Tamil nation. There must be a recognition that the discrimination, deprivation and exclusion from political representation and power processes as well as the physical insecurity inflicted upon it have forced the Tamil nation to seek a political space of its own.

The brutalisation and alienation of the Tamil Nation by the oppressive Sinhala governments is much older than the LTTE. Decitizenation of substantial numbers of Tamils occupying the hill country, long before the birth of any Tamil resistance and long before any of the member of the LTTE was born, is a clear indication that Sinhala racism is the fundamental problem in Sri Lanka, not the Tamil resistance. As one federal judge in the United States observed, the LTTE arose as a result of the Sri Lankan Government's attempt to reduce Tamils to second class citizens or even non-entities. And as Sri Lanka's foreign minister, Mr. Laxman Kadirgamer, aptly put in his speech at the Asia Society in New York in April 1995: "LTTE is fighting for a cause in which they believe, and there are historical precedents for it, and there is a historical genesis for why they are doing what they do". The cause of the conflict lies not in "terrorism", but in the brutalisation and alienation of the Tamil nation by the Sinhala establishment. President Chandrika Kumaratunga's recent polemical stipulation of LTTE's laying down of arms as a precondition for future negotiations, is a manifestation of the government's insistence on denying equality to the Tamil Nation. The Tamils constitute a "people" under international law and are therby entitled to exercise the right of self determination and, as a corollary the right to engage in an armed campaign. This is in accordance with the General Assembly Declaration of Friendly Relations Among States, which is considered as a customary international law.

For a successful negotiated outcome both parties should proceed on a principal of fairness and free will. A

nation cannot negotiate when it is under occupation. One cannot negotiate under duress. Even the most basic contractual law prohibits it, let alone its being, at the level of nations, a violation of the right to self-determination. A negotiated settlement that is gained through coercion only serves to perpetuate and institutionalise the conflict in such a way that "peace through war" will become part of the way of life.

A wholly different constructive element is necessary for a truly successful negotiated settlement. The international community has requisite ability to facilitate the peace process and should play a vital role in it. Moral support of the international community for the victim of aggression will prevail upon the aggressor to seek a resolution that takes into account the needs and interests of both parties. Unfortunately, in Sri Lanka we are witnessing a phenomenon in which the victim is brutalized, then blamed. This is due to the powerlessness of the Tamil people vis a vis their access to the media.

Due to the censorship instituted by the Sri Lankan Government, truth itself has become a victim. Therefore, international opinion regarding the conflict in Sri Lanka is fundamentally biased, and the international community has so far been disinclined to show sympathy for the Tamil victimisation. For example when the peace process on the island collapsed, the blame was put on LTTE. Now as one diplomat observed, when negotiations collapse the blame usually rests on the withdrawing party, especially where it is a non state entity. If the withdrawing party is unable to explain its actions because of its powerlessness and lack of access to the media, however, it has no choice but to bear the brunt of the criticism.

The fact that the Sri Lankan Government was escalating its military might even as the talks were in progress, the fact of LTTE's insistence that the urgent day to day problems of severe food, medicine and fuel shortages be given priority; the fact that the LTTE's proposals to address four situations of paramount importance out of which three were related to civilian life; the fact that LTTE withdrew from the negotiations in conformity within three weeks notice, whereas the Agreement required only a 72 hour notice, are all relevant to forming a correct opinion about the LTTE's behavior, but none of them were brought to the international community's attention as a result of the Tamils lack of media access. On the other hand, the lifting of the food embargo, a belated fulfillment of the state's moral and legal obligation to its citizen is viewed as a major concession on President Chandrika's part. This is largely due to the manner in which this event was represented in the media. When the LTTE explicitly announced its willingness to consider a political arrangement short of an independent state, their act of goodwill was not appreciated by the International Community because it had not been adequately covered in the media.

The same asymmetry in the two parties', access to the media results in an effective and swift response by the International Community when certain actions are attributed to the LTTE without proof, whereas sheer silence or indifference occur in response to massacres committed by the Sri Lankan Government, such as Navaly church bombing, school bombings and recently the Kumarapuram massacres.

The illusion shared by many today, that President Chandrika's devolution package is a panacea for the national conflict in Sri Lanka, is also the product of a well-orchestrated media campaign by the Sri Lankan Government. It is very sad that many "bought" the spurious package without the benefit of a detailed analysis of its contents. It is therefore necessary to examine whether the devolution package indeed provides for meaningful power sharing between Tamils and Sinhalese on the island of Sri Lanka, and whether it is adequate to guarantee the physical security of the Tamil population. It is said in the media and even in some academic circles that the proposal, even though by name its called a devolution package, in reality embodies a federal formula.

Victims of Navaly church bombing

The core of federalism is division of power. In other words, non-centralisation is the key principle of federalism. Non-centralisation is not synonymous with either decentralisation or devolution. Decentralisation or devolution presupposes a higher authority which chooses to dissolve its power. As Daniel Elzar, an expert on Federalism observes, the government that can decentralise or devolve can also re-centralise it if so desires. "Hence in decentralised systems the diffusion of power is actually a matter of chance, not right, and as history reveals in the long run, it is usually treated as such". "Devolution implies hierarchy, a pyramid of government where power flows downward from the top, whereas non-centralisation requires that there can be no single centre, but rather a dispersal of power among a number of centres that must co-ordinate their activities and policies with one another in order to make the entire polity work". " In any hierarchy, the top is expected to have more authority and power than the middle or the bottom, which contradicts the basic principles of federalism." Moreover, the implication to the effect that there exists a legitimate higher authority in Colombo is false both historically and legally. Consequently, the very notion that power somehow "devolves" from Colombo to the NorthEastern Region fails to withstand rational scrutiny.

Another important feature of federalism is over-representation of the constituent unit in the centre so as to enable the unit to participate effectively in policy making and governance. Kumaratunga's proposals are completely devoid of any such power sharing arrangement. As the title and the substance of the "Devolution Proposals" reveal beyond any doubt, what is proposed is not anything that resembles federalism even remotely.

The other question is whether the Kumaratunga's proposals allow Tamils to have a last word in the determination of their own destiny. The question before us is whether, under the proposed polity on the island of Sri Lanka, the Tamils indeed have sufficient say in matters affecting their national existence. It should be observed at the outset that the Sri Lankan government's attempts to undermine the LTTE and to impose the Devolution package upon the Tamils are a clear violation of the Tamils right to self determination. The Devolution package has not been presented to the LTTE and the Govt. has publicly stated that it will not talk to the LTTE. The first step for negotiated settlement is that the Govt. should recognize the LTTE as the sole legitimate representative of the Tamils and start to learn to deal with them. Even if the Devolution package is implemented with participation of the LTTE there is nothing to prevent the proposal's provisions from being undone unilaterally by the sheer Sinhala majority.

Navaly church bombing

The Sinhalese in Sri Lanka constitute not only a numerical but also permanent political majority. While it is true that under a proportional representation no single political party will enjoy a two-thirds majority in Parliament, the combined Sinhala political parties will nevertheless always enjoy at least a two-thirds majority. Furthermore, by constituting 74% of the entire population, the Sinhalese are able unilaterally to modify or abrogate the whole body of the present proposals. It should be remembered that the Sinhala only Act, the 1972 Constitution and the 1978 Constitution were adopted over the objections of the Tamil nation.

Sri Lanka's majority rule does not uphold democratic ideals, it constitutes a veritable tyranny of the majority. According to the Nobel Prize winning economist, Sir. Arther Lewis, majority rule may be interpreted as undemocratic because it is compatible with the principles of exclusion. He emphasized that the primary meaning of democracy is that all who are affected by a decision should have the chance to participate in making that decision either directly or through chosen representatives.

Political scientists and constitutionals lawyers have translated these concerns and ideals into an institutional concept known as Consociational Democracy defined by concurrent majorities and power sharing at the centre.

In Belgium, under the 1970 constitution, the cabinet must consist of equal members of Dutch speaking and French speaking ministers. In the Netherlands Antilles, in order to moderate the Separatist tendency of Aruba, an over-representation of Aruba in the Federal Chamber was introduced coupled with a two-third majority for constitutional change. The significance of a consociational arrangement is recognised in the U.S. brokered agreement for Bosnia-Herzegovina. According to the Agreed Basic Principles, two thirds of the members of the proposed parliament and the proposed presidency will be elected from the territory of the Bosnian

Croatian Federation and one third from the territory of the Republic Srpska. All parliamentary actions will be by majority vote provided that the majority included at least one third of the votes from each entity. Similarly it is also proposed that" all Presidency decisions will be taken by the majority vote, provided however, that if one third or more of the members disagree with the decision to be destructive of a vital interest of the entity or the entities from which the dissenting members were elected, the matter will be referred immediately to the appropriate entitys/entities' parliament. If any such parliament confirms the dissenting position by a two-thirds vote, then the challenged decision will not take effect.

In Mrs. Kumaratunga's proposals, the concepts of concurrent majority rule and power sharing at the centre are conspicuous by their very absence. Kumaratunga's proposals also rupture the territorial integrity of Tamil homeland. The proposals clearly state that the currently merged North Eastern province will be demarcated.

Mrs. Kumaratunga's proposal's life span will be solely dependent upon Sinhalese benevolence. The lessons of history and the most basic prudence do not allow the Tamils to put themselves in such a vulnerable position, especially after the sacrifice of so many lives. History will not forgive us if we do. Thus, if the "Devolution Proposals" truly become a step towards terminating the conflict, they must go beyond the present provisions in terms not only for more powers to the North Eastern region, but also for a concurrent majority rule and parity at the centre.

The "Devolution Proposals" are silent about specific changes that the boundaries of the devolved unit will undergo. In contrast with Belgium, where the established boundaries may only be changed by a special two-thirds majority vote in parliament combined with a majority of votes within each linguistic group, the boundaries in Sri Lanka that will be established for the Northern and Eastern regions will be liable to unilateral alterations by the Sinhala-dominated centre.

Thus it is not enough that the proposed Northern region should be comprised of the existing Northern and Eastern provinces, but also provisions must be made that the region's boundaries may not be changed without the consent of the respective Council.

It is important to bear in mind that the conflict on the island of Sri Lanka was not caused by the way that the power was distributed between the centre and the regions. Indeed, as Prof. K.M de Silva of the University of Peradeniya observed recently, there was no enthusiasm for devolution in the Sinhalese areas of the Country. The current Sri Lankan representative to the United Nations, Hon. H. L. de Silva observed that the "federal system is much too expansive a luxury for a small state. A unitary system makes for the avoidance of unnecessary expenditure and consequent waste, prevents the duplication of establishment cost that is necessarily involved when creating regional governments with recruitment machinery... a two tiered government structure may be too great a burden for such a state." This view was corroborated by the economist and banker, N.U. Jayawardena.

The crux of the matter is that the island of Sri Lanka is inhabited by at least two distinct nations the Sinhalese and the Tamils. The Muslims have a separate identity though they have not made a claim for nationhood. The current conflict has resulted from the exclusion of the Tamil nation by the Sinhalese from the political and the power processes. Unfortunately, the Colombo political establishment lacks the courage or candour to admit this truth. The denial and deception on the part of the Colombo political establishment are not merely self defeating but they hinder all prospects for negotiated settlement that will squarely address the cause of the conflict. Recognition of this simple truth, namely that the island of Sri Lanka is inhabited by two nations who have the right to nationhood will help the parties to address the core issue fairly and squarely.

Recently in addressing the conflict in Bosnia Herzogovinia, the US administration rejected the so-called Vance-Owen plan, which would have divided Bosnia into several territories with a view to devolving power to them from the center; instead it proposed a peace settlement which took into consideration that the Bosnian conflict is not about the

Nagarkovil school girl

distribution of power between the center and the periphery, but rather a struggle for political power and territory. It was proposed that "Bosnia and Herzogovina will consist of two entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzogovina and the republic of Srpska".

It is refreshing that there is a growing awareness of the true cause of the conflict on the part of the Colombo establishment. The Island newspaper carried an editorial which suggested that the Sri Lankan government should confine the regional councils to the North and East only. **Even if the Colombo political establishment lacks the integrity to treat the conflict as one of a national nature, and insists on dealing with it by way of a "Regional" formula, it must acknowledge that the north Eastern council is not just another council, but an entity whose function is to protect and promote the aspirations of the Tamil nation.** This involves an asymmetrical relationship of the kind that is prevalent in many parts of the world. For example an asymmetrical relationship between Quebec and the rest of Canada was instituted by the British North American Act, and envisaged in the Meechlake Accord and the Charlestown Accord. Such asymmetrical relationships are also observed in Malaysia and to some degree in Germany and Switzerland.

Asymmetry normally applies to three aspects of a federation, namely the Constituent unit, to Jurisdiction and to representation at the centre. Even though the form of asymmetry with respect to the Constituent unit is indeed envisaged by Mrs.Kumaratunga's. Devolution Package, it provides for no jurisdictional or representational asymmetry.

Nagarkovil school girl

The issue of asymmetry is of utmost importance and entails significant practical consequences concerning the nature of the settlement the "Devolution Proposals" seek to effect. The proposals provide for the establishment of the conference of chief minister which is to be vested with considerable authority. Lacking an symmetrical provision, the North Eastern Council will be confined to the status of yet another ordinary body alongside the eight Sinhala Councils. In other words the Tamil dominated North East council will be reduced to a permanent minority among those entities, which will effectively bar the North Eastern Council from effective participation in the power process. Therefore, asymmetry should be regarded as an indispensable first step toward any meaningful settlement. The proposed Northern Council must be much more than an ordinary regional council; it must genuinely express, enact and represent the aspirations of the Tamil Nation. Anything less than that is heresy and stands no chance.

Besides lacking power sharing at the center, any power sharing between the center and the regions is also lopsided. Since time does not permit me to engage in detailed analysis I would only like to say a few words with respect to latter. Under the "Devolution Proposals", the regions are endowed with the power to be consulted and burden with the obligation to get concurrence from the centre in the areas of state land, finance, law and order and education. The meaning and depth of the consultative power is illustrated by the President Kumaratunga and the author and the constitutional minister Professor G.L Peires in the context of state land. Under the proposal it is stated that the centre may utilize the state land for the purposes "in respect of a reserved subject" in consultation with the Regional Council. According to Professor G.L Peires, "consultation" virtually "connotes informing" as distinct from concurrence, and the state will have the full ability to deprive a regional council of its land even if the council would object it. It follows then that consultative power is nothing but a hollow one.

When the political proposals were converted into a legal formulations, changes were created, so that the already defective proposals were made even more untenable. These changes include the role of the Buddhist clergy in the political affairs of the country which rings a death knell for secularism and caters to the growing Buddhist fundamentalism on the island of Sri Lanka; the dissolution of the regional council under the guise of imment and direct threat to the unity of country. **There is a saying in my language that "kaluthai theinthu katterumbu anathu". If**

I put it in English, the "Devolution Proposals" were initially a donkey and on translation to legal formula, became an ant. Meaning what was week to begin with has become meaningless.

The changes that have been made to the package follow the pattern of deals made to Tamils historically, where every agreement is either abrogated or changed. This points to a fundamental problem in the Sri Lankan polity. The fundamental problem facing Mrs. Kumaratunga is that Sinhala establishment does not want to grant any power to Tamils. Since it cannot be presented to the international community the government goes through various public relations excercises which in effect makes the government's position dishonest.

As the current situation demonstrates, a negotiated settlement may become feasible only with active participation of the International Community. The rationale is that the distrust between the two parties is too deep; as such effective communication is impossible in the absence of any international facilitator. The LTTE has consistently said that it welcomes international facilitation. Unfortunately the Sri Lankan foreign minister recently said they were matured enough to resolve the conflict, even after loss of 50,000 people and despite the fact that the conflict has gone on for 12 years. This is a childish and unfortunate attitude for the government to assume. This kind of attitude and arrogance will only serve to perpetuate the conflict.

It is high time that the international Community should become aware of its vital and moral responsibility in this regard. The Tamils' behaviour in the conflict grows out of real conditions. It should be remembered they have been living in a continual state of war for over ten years now. It should also be recognised that the Tamils are deprived by the Sri Lankan Government of the most essential, elementary rights and dignities. It should be borne in mind that unlike the Sri Lankan Government, the LTTE which currently administers a de-facto state, does not have the luxury of a state apparatus to rely on.

Student protest over Nagercoil bombing

A recognition of the above realities, along with the moral incentives that the International Community has at its disposal will enable it to exercise influence over the parties and the final outcome of the conflict. **Supplying the Sri Lankan Government with more aid than it had asked for and remaining passive observers of the Sri Lankan Government's calculated genocidal attacks, while at the same time maintaining a critical and hostile attitude towards the victim, are not policies that add to the dignity of the victim, and are not policies that add to the dignity of the International Community nor contribute towards a peaceful resolution. The victims' faith in the International Community's sense of goodness and justice should not be betrayed.**

The argument that state-to-state relations take precedence over relations with non-state entities does not hold water. International law and international relations have long recognised that non-state entities are legitimate actors in international life. The recognition of human rights is one example where priority is assigned to non-state entities, over states. With this in mind, the International Community should reconsider its attitude towards the LTTE's legitimate campaign and find a new course of action with respect to the conflict on the Island of Sri Lanka.

As I have attempted to demonstrate the imperatives pointing in this direction are above all of a moral nature. On the legal side of the issue, it is essential to recognise that since self determination is a legitimate and internationally recognised right, as the LTTE is in charge of a defacto state, it has every right to be treated as a government. Negotiations toward the conflict's resolution should thus be conducted on what amounts to an intergovernmental basis. The International Community's efforts in trying to bring about peace on the Island of Sri Lanka will be best applied if it tries to create incentives for both parties to reopen negotiations with the above realisation in mind.

(Visuvanathan Rudrakumaran is political advisor, Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, International Unit USA) ●

SRI LANKAN WAR ON THE TAMILS: APRIL'96 DIARY

Muslim civilians killed

The indiscriminate shelling of residential areas continues in the North and East. On 02 April 1996, the Artillery shells fired by the Sri Lankan forces stationed at the Valaichenai Paper factory army camp hit the Muslim sector of Thiyavedduvan Village in the East. 3 Muslim civilians were killed on the spot and 5 more were critically wounded. One Muslim woman lost her leg in the shelling. The actions of the Sri Lankan armed forces has caused panic and widespread anxiety among the Muslim population living in the Eastern province.

Volleys of shells in North

The Sri Lankan armed forces poured volleys of artillery shells into the residential areas of Vadamaratchi and Thenmaratchi for the second week in succession in preparation for their declared new military offensive in the area. The Sri Lankan armed forces stationed at Palali and Vettilaikerni have been shelling the entire civilian areas with their long range artillery guns. The worst hit are the villages of Thondaimanaru and Kerudavil in the Vadamaratchi district and Eastern sections of Thenmaratchi and Eluthumadduval in the Thenmaratchi district. This new round of army shelling has accelerated the flow of Tamil refugees out of these districts and into the Vanni Tamil Mainland.

On 3rd April between 4 PM and 5 PM in the evening bomb explosions were heard and columns of smoke were seen rising into the sky from many parts within the Sri Lankan Army occupied Valigamam where units of the Sri Lankan Army and the LTTE forces are engaged in combat.

Helicopter havoc

The Ukrainian built M.I. 24 helicopter gunships of Sri Lankan Air Force are causing havoc in the North. These helicopter gunships which caused severe civilian casualties in Nachchikuda, Mannar recently ware back once again on 4 April 1996 at about 3 pm in the Northern Jaffna peninsula. Many houses and properties were destroyed when one of these M.I.24 helicopter gunship fired several air to surface rockets on villages of Watharavathai, Kapputhu and Mandan in Jaffna district. Civilians avoided casualties by taking cover in bomb shelters and underground bunkers.

CENSORSHIP CONDEMNED

COLOMBO, April 2 (Reuter) - Sri Lanka's three-month censorship of the local media and its continued refusal to grant journalists access to the war-torn north, was denounced in a report issued by a London-based anti-censorship group on Tuesday.

The report, called ``Silent War" and issued by Article 19, the International Centre Against Censorship, also voiced other concerns about freedom of expression in Sri Lanka.

Censorship was introduced last September after President Chandrika Kumaratunga told the press to act responsibly in reporting the war against the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, fighting for a homeland in the north and east.

Article 19, named after article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights protecting freedom of expression, criticised government inconsistencies in censoring stories.

``Of even greater consequence, however, was the fact that journalists were unable to observe the war and its effects on civilians themselves, increasing their dependence on official information in their war reporting," the group said.

The report also criticised the government for what it called verbal assaults on international relief agencies working in the north.

Food crisis in Kilinochchi

Essential food levels are at all time low in Kilinochchi district due to the hold up of lorries in Vavuniya. Refugees who arrived recently to Kilinochchi from Vadamaratchi and Thenmaratchi divisions are forced to purchase their essential items in the open market for much higher prices. International aid agencies like UNHCR, CARE and ICRC are taking this matter very seriously and it is feared that the entire assistance programme will come to a halt if the lorries are not permitted to proceed to North within the next 48 hours.

UNHCR help sought

As Colombo Government authorities have decided not to take action against the PLOTE group for illegally demanding money from food lorries, the Government Agent of Killinochchi has sought assistance from UNHCR to resolve this matter. Armed members of PLOTE, a Tamil parliamentary group working for the armed forces at military check points in Vavuniya, are demanding a payment of Rs 3000 for themselves from each lorry that carries essential food items to the Tamil people in Mannar, Mullaitivu and Killinochchi districts. It was said yesterday that the issue of essential items to the displaced people staying in Killinochchi district has come to a halt due to this action by the PLOTE group.

Hindu Societies appeal

An appeal to Bal Thackeray, the leader of Shiv Sena (A Hindu political party in India), has been sent by the Union of Hindu Societies in the Eastern Province. Among other things the appeal states that the Tamil people are undergoing severe hardship at the hands of the Sri Lankan Government and its armed forces and that the Tamil peoples homelands should be recognised in the first place if they are to live in peace and dignity in the Island of Sri Lanka.

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Vadamaratchi battered

On 4 April 1996, from about 8.40 AM in the morning till late in the evening, an unprecedented number of artillery shells hit several parts of Vadamaratchi. The Sri Lankan soldiers stationed at the Vettilaikerny army camp concentrated on hitting civilian targets in Waththarayan areas while the soldiers stationed at the Palaly army camp hit several civilian targets in Thondaimanaru and Kerudavil areas. Large numbers of Tamil people are now leaving their homes in Vadamaratchi to the safety of the distant Vanni Tamil mainland or to the relative safety of the adjoining Thenmaratchi district.

NGOs refused entry

The representatives of the International Non Governmental Organisations and other humanitarian organisations arriving in Colombo from overseas to evaluate the plight of the displaced Tamils are being turned back by the Sri Lankan government. All overseas representatives are being refused access to the Tamil areas and are being turned down even when they expressed significant concerns regarding the blocking of essential supplies in Vavuniya by PLOTE and the Sri Lankan armed forces, and the major humanitarian crisis that is developing.

TEEDOR opens Nutrition centre

TEEDOR has opened a nutrition centre after receiving reports of malnutrition among babies in Vanni Tamil Mainland. This centre will issue food items to the affected families. A recent survey conducted among 4,272 babies revealed that 1,410 of them are suffering from malnutrition. The TEEDOR has also issued appeals among affected families to come forward and get assistance from the centre.

Water supply denied

The Sri Lankan government has refused to grant permission to the ICRC to bring a tube well drilling machine to the Vanni area. The ICRC was trying to provide water supply for the displaced people who have moved into Vanni from the Jaffna peninsula. The Sri Lankan Defence department has refused to give permission without stating any reasons.

Families resettled

All 165 families who were accommodated as refugees in Akkarayankulam School and Skandapuram Junior School buildings have all been resettled now in the Akkarayan East area. The LTTE civil administration issued half an acre of land to each of the refugee families while the International Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) 'CARE' donated cooking utensils, mats, buckets etc. for the families.

Human chain protest

On 11th April, Tens of thousands of Tamil people participated in a highly successful huge human chain rally holding hands on each side of the road all the way from the South coast of the Jaffna peninsula to the North coast; from Chavakachcheri in the South (Thenmaratchi) along Kandy road to Kodikamam and then from there to Point Pedro in the North (Vadamaratchi) where the human chain ended.

More than 100 organisations joined together in an unparalleled show of solidarity and support for the rally and demonstration which was organised by a consortium of all the organisations in the Jaffna peninsula in which men, women, children and the elderly held hands together in a continuous link for more than 20 KM across from one end of the peninsula to the other.

In the rally the Tamil people braved the hot blazing sun, holding placards and shouting slogans condemning the Sri Lankan Government for perpetrating genocide of Tamils in Sri Lanka.

Thandikulam military checkpoint closed

Thandikulam military checkpoint at Vavuniya to remain closed for travellers for 4 days starting from the 12th of April.

The notice board hanging at the Thandikulam Sri Lankan barrier declares that no passenger traffic will be permitted to pass through for a period of four days from the 12th April. The reason for doing so was not given by the Military authorities. The Sri Lankan soldiers have been verbally intimidating the Tamil travellers with the same message for the past few days.

Road users harassed

More and more pressure is brought to bear on the civilians living in the army held Batticaloa - Valaichchenai areas. Road users and bus travellers are undergoing tremendous difficulties and delays in the Army sentry points all along the highway. Passengers have to wait for hours in the hot sun. On top of this, the goods carried by the people are subject to stringent military scrutiny. Bus travellers are asked to get down and walk long distances. Even sick people and pregnant women are forced to walk between the sentry points.

Ill nourished children

Tamil people being admitted to the Chavakachcheri hospital suffering from diseases which are bought about by malnutrition are on the increase said a Chavakachcheri hospital source. Most of the patients who are admitted to the hospital suffering from diseases connected to malnutrition are children below the ages of 15 and recently displaced refugees from Valigamam said the hospital source. Tamil people especially young children and refugees in the North have fallen victim to malnutrition after the Sri Lankan Government cut short the supply of food to the Tamil people in the North from the year 1990 after declaring an economic blockade on the region.

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Sri Lanka launches second offensive

Sri Lankan government embarks on a military offensive code named 'Riviresa Two' on April 19.

In an attempt to deny a political solution to the Tamil people and driven by an ambition to capture Tamil Lands and to subjugate the Tamils, the Sri Lankan Government launched a new military offensive to capture the Tamil homelands of Thenmaratchi and Vadamaratchi. The Government also gagged the International and Local press by refusing them permission to visit the Tamil areas where the Government has declared a war.

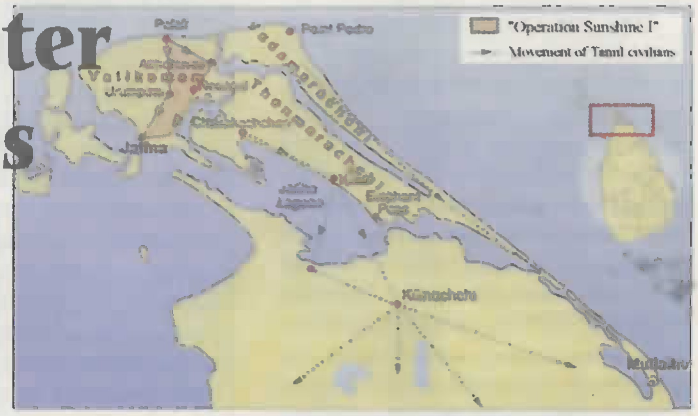
Sri Lankan armed forces while cowardly firing heavy barrages of artillery shells on thickly populated Tamil areas, advanced by mid day to the village of Madduvil near Chavakachcheri in Thenmaratchi, where the LTTE forces stopped their advance any further.

As part of their programme to soften up the area prior to their advance, the Sri Lankan armed forces stationed at the Palali and Elephant pass camps fired artillery shells after artillery shells throughout the day, without any break on the thickly populated areas of Thenmaratchi and Vadamaratchi. In Thenmaratchi, artillery shells rained down on the villages of Madduvil, Kanakanpuliyadi, Sarasalai, Kalvayal and Katkuvil which are all close to the town of Chavakachcheri. In Vadamaratchi, the Sri Lankan armed forces directed their artillery shells on the heavily populated villages of Thikkam, Valvettiturai, Puraporukki. 10 Tamil civilians were killed and 30 civilians were wounded by the Sri Lankan artillery shells and aerial bombardment.

An accurate assessment of the dead and injured could not be made as the artillery shells have been falling every where. Dead bodies are found on the road unattended, while people are fleeing in panic. The Doctors and nurses and staff have left the Chavakachcheri hospital because the area came under intense artillery fire. The patients who were warded in the hospital also have left for safer areas.

Tens of thousands of Tamil civilians have started fleeing their homes to avoid getting massacred by the advancing Sri Lankan army. The Tamil civilians who lived in west Thenmaratchi areas and along the coastal belts of Vadamaratchi have been severely battered by this Sri Lankan military assault. A major part of the Tamil population of Thenmaratchchi West have now shifted towards the centre of Thenmaratchchi in their attempt to flee to Vanni, while a huge number of Tamils - a number not seen ever before even during the time of the Sri Lankan offensive on Valigamam during October-December 1995, have already reached the shores of Kilali in the process of fleeing to the relative safety of the Vanni the Tamil mainland.

20 April: Helicopter fire on refugees



Mi 24 Sri Lankan Helicopter gunships opened fire on fleeing Tamil refugees who had collected in very large numbers at the shores of Kilali waiting to make the difficult Kilali lagoon crossing in their desperate bid to reach the safety of Vanni the Tamil mainland. All family members of one refugee family have been completely wiped out and hundreds of Tamil refugees have been seriously injured in the Helicopter gunship attack. The dead and injured refugees are so numerous that it is difficult to count. Identifying the dead is impossible as they are torn beyond identification. It is evident that large scale genocidal slaughter is being carried out by the Sri Lankan Army in Kilali and elsewhere in Thenmaratchi and Vadamaratchi.

All roads leading to the Kilali embarkation point are choked with thousands of Tamil civilians who are fleeing the Jaffna peninsula unable to face the genocidal slaughter unleashed by the Sri Lankan armed forces in the military operation code named 'Riviresa Two'. In many parts of the Jaffna peninsula the situation is worsening by the hour as the armed forces are directing their attacks on Tamil civilians. Many more civilians have been killed and many more are seriously wounded in other parts of the Jaffna peninsula. ●

SRI LANKAN WAR ON THE TAMILS: APRIL'96 DIARY

21 April: Hundreds of thousands of people move towards Kilali

As part of its plan to subjugate the Tamils and to appropriate their lands, the Sri Lankan Government forces have today, opened a second new front in the direction of Thondamanaru and is attempting to move into Vadamaratchi with tanks and armoured vehicles while continuing their attack on its first front at Madduvil in Thenmaratchi area.

On top of army tank fire, heavy artillery shelling and mortar shelling is continuing to be directed into civilian targets in Vadamaratchi and Thenmaratchi today, in an overall plan to destroy, crush and bulldoze through buildings, structures or living things whether human or not that lays in the path of the military advance of the Sinhala armed forces into the Tamil territory. Main shelling has been carried out from Elephant Pass army camp and Palaly army camp.

More than a hundred thousand people from Thenmaratchi and several more thousands from Vadamaratchi are moving towards Kilaly in pouring rain in order to escape the genocidal slaughter unleashed by the advancing Sinhala armed forces. Already more than a hundred thousand have gathered in the Kilaly region awaiting their turns to make the difficult boat journey across the Jaffna lagoon in an attempt to reach the safety of Vanni the Tamil mainland. People have just gathered under trees and other vegetation in order to take shelter from the rain, and the blazing sun and to pass off the night while waiting for the boat service.

Sri Lankan Air Force planes and MI 24 helicopter gunships have launched indiscriminate bombing, rocketing and heavy vehicle fire at the fleeing civilians who have choked all the roads leading to Kilaly. So far more than 15 have been confirmed killed including 6 members of one family. They were all killed on the spot when a Sri Lankan MI 24 helicopter gunship launched rockets at the group of people moving in the direction of Kilaly. One young girl was the only surviving member of the family. More than 45 have been seriously hurt in the attack so far. Several more have sustained light injuries. At this stage it has not been possible to collect the details of every one who have been killed or injured in this attack but details of some of the people injured in this attack are added at the end of this report.

The MI 24 helicopter gunships also attacked the fleeing civilians at the Kilaly coast where they have gathered to cross the Jaffna lagoon. Several people have been killed and many more have been injured. But exact causality figures are is still not available as a result of the chaotic situation that has developed there.

From days long before the start of the offensive, the LTTE civil administration had arranged a free boat service for the Tamil people to cross the Jaffna Lagoon. Due to the present increase in demand and the present emergency, the LTTE civil administration has now arranged for more number of boats and also increased the frequency of the boat service to the people, all free of charge. Those fleeing across are also being helped with free land transportation to move to any location of their choice in Vanni. They are also being provided with immediate shelter and other assistance by the LTTE civil administration. ●

22 April: Trapping the Tamil people

The Sri Lankan Government's and the Sri Lankan armed force's strategy is to trap as many as possible of the fleeing Tamil civilians and to retain them by force within the Sri Lankan military occupied areas in the Jaffna peninsula. Armed with this strategy the army is directing its artillery shells on the fleeing Tamil civilians who have choked all the roads to Kilaly, walking sadly in their thousands carrying with them what ever their little possessions they had.

One of the axes of the Sri Lankan armed forces has now advanced to Kachchai in Thenmaratchi close to the Kilaly embarkation point in the Jaffna lagoon in a bid to cut off the fleeing civilians. The armed forces stationed at Kachchai are opening fire on embarkation points and firing at the boats carrying Tamil civilians across the lagoon to Vanni.

Sri Lankan war planes also dropped many bombs on Kachchai area close to Kilaly where the fleeing civilians have concentrated in their thousands waiting to catch a boat across Jaffna lagoon to the safety of Vanni Tamil mainland. The Sri Lankan Mi 24 helicopter gunships have also joined in this crime against humanity. The Helicopter gunships have repeatedly fired rockets on Tamil civilians waiting at Kilaly.

Even though several civilians have been killed and several more have been

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Vasantharajah on "Operation Sunshine II"

Capturing the civilians is Government strategy

All the signals coming from the war zone indicate that "Operation Sunshine 2" is somewhat different from the previous operation (OS1) in terms of objectives. This time the military's attempt is not so much aimed at destroying, or even defeating, a substantial section of the LTTE. The military obviously knows that the LTTE forces are not waiting there to get killed by random bombing and shelling. OS2 looks more like a premeditated attack on civilian targets at random in order to terrorize the civilians and force them to return to Valigamam so that the government can set up something resembling a civil administration.

But what if the Tamil civilians stage a second exodus to LTTE controlled Vanni areas? In order to stop this, the military seems to have adopted at least three tactics:

a) Round up areas where people who fled Valigamam are living and force them to return to Valigamam at gun point. (This is exactly what the military did by rounding up Chavakachcheri) Once they return to Valigamam district the government could provide various incentives, in the form of money, cement, health facilities and other social conditions for them to settle there.

b) Stop civilians trying to escape into LTTE controlled Vanni district. In order to do this they deliberately bomb and shell those refugees who attempt to cross the Kilali lagoon.

c) Impose an effective economic blockade on Vanni areas so that the refugees living there can be eventually starved into submission; particularly when they see the living conditions of other civilians who have returned to Valigamam are enjoying, they also might be tempted to return there.

The above analysis fits in very well with the general (naive) understanding the government has about the Tamil struggle. The government seriously believes that if it succeds in installing an administration in Jaffna with the help of the Tamil renegades in Colombo, and devolve some powers along the lines indication in the diluted package, and pour in funds liberally to improve conditions in Jaffna, then the LTTE could be politically marginalised from the Tamil people.

The strategy is identical with the one government had during the peace process, and then during the previous military operations: to try and drive a wedge between the LTTE and the Tamil people. The way the government is trying to achieve this now is, on one hand, to force a substantial section of Tamils to live within military - controlled areas and bribe them to accept its "solution", and on the other hand, to starve the people living in the LTTE - controlled areas in the hope of breaking their will power and make them return to Valigamam.

All this shows the government advisers' falilure to grasp the depth of the Tamil liberation struggle. What they do not understand is that even if a substantiall section of Tamils do go to Valigamam and accept the "bribes" given to them, LTTE would have no difficulty in thriving among the people there and launching major attacks to get rid of the occupying Sinhala army there. The Sinhala government is incapable of grasping the strength of the Tamil national consciousness which has developed in leaps during the past decade. ●

injured, so far it has been possible to collect records and maintain details on only 30 Tamil civilians killed and at least 50 badly injured because the whole area is under Sri Lankan military attack.

Dead bodies are lying on the roads. In this pandemonium nobody has the time or the means to bury the dead. Everybody is in a frantic hurry to escape the genocidal slaughter unleashed by the advancing Sri Lankan armed forces. Injured people are also not being attended to and are in a terrible situation. No hospitals or medical institutions are functioning as doctors and nurses have deserted their hospitals and have joined the crowds on the run becoming part of the massive movement of people who are fleeing to Vanni.

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22nd April: Civilians as human shields

Sri Lankan Armed forces use Tamil civilians as human shields.

The Sri Lankan government's offensive towards the interior of the Jaffna peninsula continued for the fourth day. The security forces indiscriminately launched artillery, tank and mortar shells into all areas of the peninsula. The Sri Lankan forces consolidating their positions at Kodikamam and Kachchai were directing their fire towards the Kilali ferry crossing area. They were assisted by artillery fire from the Elephant pass military camp. In an attempt to prevent and disrupt the lagoon crossing Sri Lankan airforce planes and MI 24 Helicopters again attacked the Kilali coast. Helicopters also fired on boats taking people across to Vanni. The military and the Air Force were concentrating their shelling and bombing on the main roads leading to Kilali.

Bodies were lying on the streets everywhere. The intensity of the shelling has prevented any gathering of information regarding the present death toll.

The advancing Sri Lankan forces are also using the civilians who have been trapped in the shelling and have been captured, as human shields to facilitate their rapid advance deep into Thenmaratchi area. The helicopters are following the fleeing population and launching rocket attacks in an effort to stop them reaching the Kilali crossing.

For the last four days people have been fleeing in all directions in an attempt to escape from the security forces and also to save their lives from the indiscriminate shelling. Many have had nothing to eat for several days. Most people are still in blood splattered or rain drenched clothing unable to get a change of clothing as they fled without taking any belongings. As no medical or other first aid facilities are available in Thenmaratchi at present, many people are suffering without any medical attention to their wounds. Only the seriously injured have been transported to hospitals outside Thenmaratchi. The only survivor of a family of 7 killed three days ago in the bombing by the Sri Lankan Air Force at Eluthumattuval succumbed to her injuries yesterday. ●

Rocket fire at Mullaitivu

Also yesterday morning at about 8.00 am Argentine built Puccara bombers launched rockets and strafed the coastal areas along Mullaitivu. Mullivaykal, Valayan Madam, Ambalavan, Pokkanai and Mathalan villages were hit severely. Several fishermen fishing on the coast were strafed and have been seriously injured. At Mullivaykal, Gunapragasam age 59 father of 7 children and Chellaturai age 51 father of 3 children, were severely injured and lost their limbs in the attack. Both have been admitted to the hospital at Mullaitivu.

* * *

✪ Reports have just reached of the tragic death of a 7 year old child on the 22nd of April during the Jaffna lagoon crossing to reach Vanni. The child was travelling in a boat with his parents in a convoy of little vessels when the Sri Lankan armed forces stationed far away in their camps, fired artillery shells at the convoy. The terrified child, jumped into the sea in panic and was drowned.

* * *

✪ The Government agent of Kilinochchi is providing cooked meals for the thousands of Tamil civilians who have arrived in Vanni after escaping the Sri Lankan military attack in the Jaffna peninsula. The children are provided with 15 Rupees worth of cooked meals while the adults are provided with 25 Rupees worth of cooked meals.

23rd April: Terror campaign: checkpoint closed

In an attempt to trap as much civilians as possible Sri Lankan armed forces are unleashing a terror campaign against the fleeing innocent Tamils civilians in Jaffna peninsula. Large number of human bodies and body parts are lying along the roads leading to Kilali sea shore. Their bicycles tied with their few belongings are also lying beside their dead bodies. A refugee who escaped from Madduvil area and arrived in Kilali sea shore on 22-04-1996 morning said that he saw 3 people dying when shells exploded among a crowd of fleeing civilians during the night of 21-04-1996. He said others quickly buried their mutilated bodies close by and proceeded towards Kilali.

Thandikulam check point is closed as part of the news black out; ICRC personnel were sent back

Members of International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) who were travelling to the South were sent back by the Sri Lankan army at Thandikulam check point in Vavuniya. The essential commodity purchasing officer of the Kilinochchi secretariat was also among the people who were sent back. On a notice board hanging in the barrier written in red ink that permission to cross the barrier will not be granted to anyone until 24-04-1996. But some travellers who were sent back say that the Sri Lankan soldiers manning the check point warned them not to come back until 02-05-1996.

SRI LANKAN WAR ON THE TAMILS: APRIL'96 DIARY

24 April: Army advances stopped at Thondaimanaru & Kachchai

One of the columns of the Sri Lankan armed forces that made an attempt to advance into Vadamaratchi has been stopped at Thondaimanaru and is unable to advance any further as a result of the strong resistance put up by the LTTE forces.

The other column of the Sri Lankan armed forces which advanced to Kachchai a few miles away from the Kilali boat crossing is still stuck at Kachchai and Kodikamam unable to move any further. As a result of this bonus, the Tamil civilians are still fleeing across the Jaffna lagoon and are catching their boat to freedom in Vanni the Tamil mainland.

The Sri Lankan armed forces stationed at Poonakari army camp have fired parachute flares at night and fired shells at the fleeing Tamil civilians who were making the difficult crossing across the Jaffna Lagoon to escape from the genocidal slaughter unleashed by the Sri Lankan armed forces on the Tamil civilian population in the Jaffna peninsula. The armed forces stationed at the Elephant pass army camp also fired rockets into the lagoon to attack the boats ferrying Tamil civilians to Vanni. Sri Lankan supersonic Kfir fighter planes and Helicopter gunships are also attacking the boats carrying civilians across the lagoon.

Several Tamil civilians have been killed and several more have been wounded as a result of this Sri Lankan military attack. Dead bodies are found unattended along the roads and the paths along which the people fled. It has not yet been possible to collect all the details of the dead and injured because the area is under heavy Sri Lankan military attack. ●

✪ The Government agent of Kilinochchi, held a meeting with the representatives of ICRC, UNHCR, MSF, Oxfam and FORUT and made an urgent appeal to help the refugees who have just arrived in their thousands in Vanni. In the meeting it was agreed that the Government of Sri Lanka was not interested in helping the Tamil refugees in Vanni.

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SRI LANKAN WAR ON THE TAMILS: APRIL'96 DIARY

25-27 APRIL: TRAPPED CIVILIANS HERDED INTO CAMPS

Many civilians who were trapped behind the Sri Lankan army lines when the army moved to Kodikamam have been asked to move to Valikamam areas which the army occupied six months ago. However, all the persons moving to Valikamam are being interrogated and are being issued with new identification cards. As the Sri Lankan government is paranoid that the LTTE forces may infiltrate into Valikamam areas, all young men and women in the now military occupied area are being arrested and taken for questioning and are being detained in military camps.

Leading schools in Jaffna city such as Jaffna Central College, Vembadi Girls' College, St.Patrick's College and St.John's College, some of them already partly damaged by aerial bombing and artillery shelling have been commnandeered by the army for their own use as well as for interrogation centres.The young people are being taken to undisclosed destinations for further questioning. The Old Peoples Home at Kaithady is also being used as an interrogation office. While families are being split into three categories - young men, young women and the elderly and children, there is major concern that youths, both male and female, may disappear at the hands of the Sri Lankan military.

On the 25th, at 10 a.m. MI-24 helicopter gunships of the Sri Lankan Air Force appeared in the sky above Jaffna lagoon and fired on boats packed with fleeing civilians. The Sea Tiger units which were guarding the lagoon crossing fired back on the helicopters, and due to the heavy firing withdrew from the area.

* * *

The Government Agent for Kilinochchi, Mr.Thillainadaraja has made an urgent appeal to the Commissioner of Essential Services in Colombo asking him to supply stocks of food and other essential items to the Tamils now living in the Vanni mainland. There has been a heavy strain on resources following many more thousands of refugees who had arrived in the Vanni. The letter was forwarded through the international NGO - CARE.

* * *

Several thousands of people in Thenmarachchi area who had been trying to cross over into the mainland have been surviving with meagre rations. Food and drinking water has been in short supply. Many were starving while they made their way towards Kilali. People injured by the shelling have not been treated as all hospitals had been closed.

* * *

Earlier, following heavy shelling of the coastal areas of Vadamarachchi, several families had succeeded in crossing over to the Vanni mainland. Most of the people were from Polikandy, Karaveddy and Udupiddy areas.

* * *

A 11-year old girl, Sivayogam Rajitha who earlier fled from Madduvil in Thenmarachchi, died of starvation in Kilinochchi. Prior to her arrival in Vanni, she was apparaently starving long in Madduvil, unable to get proper food as a result of the ban on foodstuffs imposed by the Sri Lankan government in Thenmarachchi. She died even after being given emergency treatment.

* * *

The unidentified body of a seven or eight year old child had been recovered from the Jaffna lagoon. The child's body is being kept in Kilinochchi for identification. The boy is among many people who were killed by Sri Lankan shelling on civilian boats crossing the lagoon.

Tamils remember Miss.Hutchins

A public meeting was held in Kilinochchi to remember the late Miss Muriel Hutchins the 98 year old English-born social worker and educationist who passed away in Kilinochchi. "Though she was born to English-speaking parents, she always considered herself as a Tamil person", said Rev.Fr.Daniel Thiyagarajah, Principal of the Seminary College, in his memorial address. She wrote and spoke fluent Tamil and was fondly called "White grandma" by local children. "Her memories will last in our soil as long as Tamils live in this land", Fr.Thiyagarajah said.

Head of the Educational Secretariat of Tamil Eelam Mr.Ilankumaran was among others who spoke of her gracious qualities and the tremendous educational service she rendered covering several decades in the Tamil homeland. A portrait of the late Miss Hutchins was unveiled by Mr.Para, the head of the judicial secretariat of Tamil Eelam.

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MASSIVE TIGER RALLY IN SWITZERLAND

On Saturday, 27 April, the city of Berne in Switzerland witnessed a scene that completely surprised the Swiss media, the local citizens and the police. Tamils numbering around 13,000 took out a procession and demonstration that culminated in a public rally in front of the Parliament in Berne. Several Swiss nationals associated themselves with the sprit of the occasion.

Professor Peter Schalk of Uppsala University of Sweden who was one of the speakers says in a communication to HOT SPRING:- "It was a powerful demonstration of unity within the Tamil community, of solidarity of the Swiss population with the Eelam Tamils, and of respect for, and appreciation of the LTTE. It also signalled a firmness of resistance to the war against civilians by the Sri Lanka government. It was also a demonstration for Peace. The message to the Swiss government was clear: Advise the Sri Lankan government to take up immediately peace negotiations with the LTTE on the level of parity of status and through mediation.

"Please notice that in Switzerland, the Swiss population is strongly involved in the cause of the Tamil refugees, participates actively in rallies and takes initiatives as in the Press conference on April 26, the day preceding the rally. Marching along with the Eelam Tamils were Swiss Reverends from the churches and Swiss Human Rights activists. The Swiss media, including TV gave generous coverage both to the Press Conference and the public rally.

Professor Peter Schalk adds:- Through all the 26 years that I have followed the conflict, I have never seen such dedication, and I cannot deny, that all we, who were "foreigners" were deeply touched. One Swiss protector started his speech by saying: "This is a happy day in my life, and he pointed out, basing himself on his own Calvinist working ethics, that the Eelam Tamils in Switzerland were like Swiss people", they worked hard, save money, and

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show no sign of criminality as is being alleged.

The rally, organised by the LTTE Swiss branch in collaboration with the Swiss Federation of Tamils, Church organisations and refugee organisations in Switzerland put forward the following demands to the Swiss Government:-

1. Swiss Govt. should recognise LTTE as a national liberation organisation
2. It should stop the police attempt to portray LTTE as a criminal organisation
3. It is believed that the Swiss Govt. has succumbed to the pressure of the Sri Lankan Govt. to take action against the LTTE representatives including its Chief representative Nadarajah Muralitharan for the sake of extending an agreement with the Sri Lankan Govt. which paves the way for the deportation of rejected Tamil asylum seekers in Switzerland. In this regard the Swiss Govt. should take steps to release the detained LTTE representatives.
4. Swiss Govt. should engage itself in efforts to bring a peaceful settlement to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka by playing a role of a neutral country.

The meeting started with the hoisting of Tamil Eelam national flag by Mr. Lawrence Thilakar, LTTE central committee member.

Many Tamils who participated in the rally voluntarily came forward and donated large amounts of money and jewellery to the funds to assist the Tamil Eelam national liberation struggle.

Among those who participated at the conference and the rally were:-

Marcel Bossonnet, lawyer, Ms. Anni Lanz, Arturo Pozzi, Vasantha Raja, Andreas Schmutz, Ms. Bea Schwager, Lawrence Thilakar and Professor Peter Schalk representing the citizens committee of Jaffna and the Jaffna university.

Protest rally in Italy

A protest rally was held in Palermo, Italy on 28 April condemning the genocidal war unleashed by the Sri Lankan Government against the Tamil people. More than 2000 people including many children, and women participated in this rally. Posters displaying the atrocities of the Sri Lankan government on the Tamil people were paraded in the rally. The rally lasted 3 hours despite heavy rains and ended after a memorandum was handed over to an Italian parliament representative.

LTTE stand clarified

The following Presse release was issued by the LTTE International Secretariat on 30 April 1996:-

In view of ambiguous reports appearing in the International Media with regard to LTTE's position on peace talks and mediation, the International Secretariat of the LTTE wishes to clarify its stand on this matter.

The LTTE is committed to a negotiated political settlement. In view of the existing hostility and mistrust between the parties in conflict, we are of opinion that a third party mediation is vital to promote the negotiating process.

The LTTE wishes to emphasise the creation of a congenial atmosphere as a necessary condition for the conduction of peace talks. Meaningful talks with Sri Lankan Government cannot be held under the constraints of war, aggression and military occupation of Tamil Lands.

The Sri Lankan Government is presently engaged in a war of aggression aimed to occupy the Tamil homeland, subjugate the Tamil population and to impose a military administration. This approach will further aggravate the conflict, prolong the war and negate the possibilities of peace. Therefore, we wish to emphasise that cessation of hostilities and de-escalation of the conflict are necessary conditions for creating a congenial atmosphere for peace process. The LTTE cannot participate in a political dialogue unless Sri Lanka puts an end to military aggression and occupation and withdraw troops from the occupied territories in the Jaffna peninsula. We urge the International Community to use their good offices to impress upon Sri Lanka government to give up the military option and create conditions of normality conducive to peace process and negotiated political settlement.

COWS, MAD COWS AND SACRED COWS

Arjuna's Column

A cow, as we all know, is one of the most docile of Earth's 'God-given creatures on four legs known to us. It doesn't shout around like humans, it only moos in private, it gives milk to the world, it chews the cud and gets about life peacefully. To be suddenly thrust into the world headlines and to be branded as "mad cows" in general, and for no fault of theirs, seems to us a most reprehensible thing. We all know that cows dont eat human beings; human beings are the ones that eat cows. Surely some one should have made strong representations to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and called for an injunction against humans, firstly for eating cows, and thereafter for maligning them. And to be told Britain envisages slaughtering 15,000 older cows a week and dump the remains into the sea? It is maddening.

Human beings, unlike animals, are of course full of hypocrisy and self-deception. As Bernard Shaw once said about the tiger: "When a man kills a tiger. he calls it sport: but when a tiger kills a man he calls it ferocity". Translated into the political language of Sri Lanka, there are more harsh words that get thrown around, like "brutality" "merciless megalomania" and so forth. Well, that is by the way. Coming to the subject of this so-called "mad cow disease" what is all this fuss and panic about? Every cow-eater today, in Europe of course, is having the word BSE on his lips, if not in his brain. What is this BSE? We are told it is short for - now hold your breath - bovine spongiform encephalopathy, whatever that means.

Everyone got into the act, the European Union, the World Health Organisation (WHO), the respected British medical journal The Lancet, farmers, scientists, journalists, beefeaters, non-beefeaters... The WHO, urged all countries to step up efforts to monitor for mad cow disease and its human version, a fatal malady known as the unpronounceable "Creutzfeldt-Jakob" disease Why they come out with these difficult names is a secret known only to the scientists.

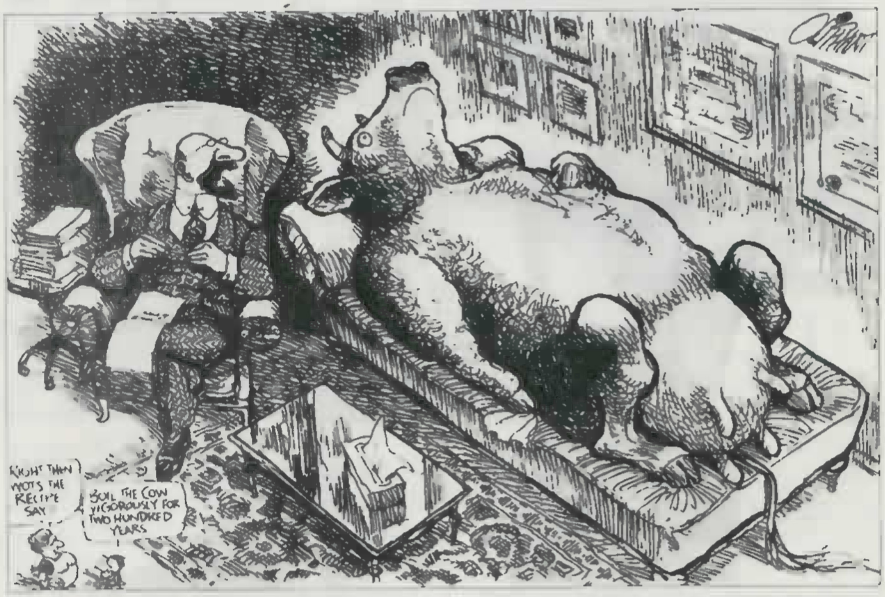
Once the panic button against British beef was pressed, it became a major crisis in Europe. The European Commission decided on March 27 that Britain's beef exports should be banned. The British were always proud of three things: Skakespeare, the Empire. and beef roast. Shakespeare is still limping along, the Empire was long gone, and now roast beef was in peril. The humiliation of losing the Empire was one thing, but now the Empire was hitting back, both in English literature and cricket. To add to all these. poor John Major was already having enough problems on his plate, Tory instability, IRA bombs and Princess Diana. And now this cow business. Crying hoarse about the European ban till the cows come home was of no use because it was the consumer who had to be convinced that his life was safe. Invited by a friend the other day, this column popped into a McDonalds' restaurant in Paris. Sauntering along, we took a furtive look at the tables on the way. No, there was no hamburger on any plate. Everyone seemed to be happy with fish and chips. The consumer is a timid animal no doubt.

* * * * * * * *

A friend of this column, Veekay. who hits upon some bright ideas whenever he has insomniac problems, buttonholed us in the middle of the road the other day. Noting the twinkle in his eye, we shepherded him to a safe corner of the pavement. "It's about this mad cow business", he said, conspiratorially. We knew he meant business. Hoping to get a croissant and coffee out of him, we signalled the nearest coffee bar."There should be more research done on this business". he said settling down on the stool. My thesis he said, is that there is a direct linkage between mad cow disease and politicians. Look at the symptoms , he said . There is loss of memory, behavioural changes, loss of motor functions like maintaining balance, as a result of which some of them go for walking sticks. Researchers also say the disease usually affects people in late middle age. Dont we see all these symptoms in Sri Lankan politicians, he argued ? True, true. we said, but why pick on the politicians alone? Maybe President Chandrika suffered a loss of memory on the question of seeing the end of the executive presidency by last July. True that her uncle Ratwatte forgot to keep his promise of finishing off the Tigers and ending the war before this Sinhala New year. But these losses of memory are common to all humans, we said. "How about the late Appapillai Amirthalingam who went round the northeast asking the people for a mandate for Tamil Eelam, and having got it, went and sat as Leader of the Opposition in Jayawardene's parliament"? Veekay countered. How about M.S who told the Sunday Times of that time nearly 20 years ago that the first thing they would do once they get the mandate was to set up a constituent assembly and draft a constitution for Tamil Eelam? And now talking of some territorial unit of devolution ? Okay, okay Veekay, we told him, these are the normal attributes of all politicians, but dont pin down this mad cow disease only on them.After all good Buddhist and Hindu politicians do not go for steak and hamburger, do they ? Veekay meanwhile was thinking of another line of research. Suppose, he said. the parents get the mad cow disease, or any other disease, like say communalism, will the offspring have a greater propensity to inherit it ? No. we assured him, that is only in the case of diabetes. That settled the argument, and we finished off with another croissant and coffee.

* * * * * * * *

Hindu India is of course one country where they dont have any qualms about mad cows. It is a land of sacred cows.Cows are the givers of milk. and occupy a central place in India's agricultural economy. The second day of the Tamil harvest festival of Thai Pongal is named after them, and they are treated with due ceremonial on that day. Even cow dung is handled with no inhibition , and is in fact used in some religious ceremonies and also used to pave floors in rural homes because it is believed to contain disinfectant properties. In Hindu mythology, Krishna in human form is depicted as a cowherd cavorting with the milkmaid gopis. This preeminent place given to the cow. and being made the object of veneration is what led to the origin of the English language expression "sacred cow"; meaning something or someone granted unreasonable immunity from criticism. The trouble comes when politicians enthroned in power try to assume the role of sacred cows! Although the Indian constitution does not say so, one suspects that cows enjoy greater rights and freedom than human beings. Once I saw on a busy narrow road. three cows calmly chewing the cud right in the middle of it, completely indifferent to the maddening traffic around them. No one shooed them away. Every vehicle, even the notoriously autocratic auto (3-wheeler) driver had to slow down and work his way around this cow roundabout. Do human beings in India have the right to lie down in the middle of the road and chew betel undisturbed ?


RIGHT THEN WOTS THE RECIPE SAY
BOIL THE COW VIGOROUSLY FOR TWO HUNDRED YEARS

`I don't think it's you. I think it's the English cooking.'

Talking of cows, this column is suddenly reminded of one-time Anglican Bishop of Kurunegala, Lakdasa de Mel. (No disrespect intended). It is a 45-year old memory. The learned, cultured Bishop, a product of Oxbridge, a genial gentleman and a witty after-dinner speaker, was an honoured guest at the annual dinner of the Jaffna College H.S.C.Students' Union, the Academy. The speaker before him was A.M.K.Kumarasamy, then Registrar of the University of Colombo and another brilliant wit. A.M.K. had pulled out of his coat pocket several sheets of blue paper which he held up as the letter of invitation sent to him by the secretary of the union - informal, chatty, including humorous references to co-educational life at Jaffna College, the kind of invitation with the "PERSONAL TOUCH". which he couldnt resist declining. When it was time for the Bishop to respond to the toast,Bishop Lakdasa said the reference to the "personal touch" reminded him of a story. In a large dairy farm in Australia, he said, they had for the first time experimented with a mechanical gadget to milk the cows. The day after it happened, two cows, Betty and Bessy, were heard discussing this innovation. "What do you think of this silly gadgetry?". Betty asked Bessy. Bessy chewed the cud for a while and said:"You know Betty, it is terribly efficient of course. But somehow I miss that PERSONAL TOUCH.". While the Bishop twirled his fingers to demonstrate that personal touch, the house roared with laughter. This columnist has a special reason to relish the memory of that dinner, because he happened to be the secretary of the union. ●

OBITUARIES

Rita, the journalist, Rita the person

The first thought that struck me when I heard of the passing away of Rita Sebastian was that it seemed so unfair - on the part of whatever hand of Fate that decides the mortal time frame of humans - to snatch her away with such short warning. At sixty, except for the brief illness that preceded her death, she was one of the busiest of journalists. She was a well-received correspondent for the largest chain of Indian newspapers, the *INDIAN EXPRESS* and correspondent for Inter-press service, and the Kyoda news agency, the founder-president of the Foreign Media Journalists' Association in Colombo and doyen among practising journalists there. In a world of news reporting where professionalism sometimes takes second place to bias and misrepresentation, Rita was a dedicated professional. No frills. no flamboyance, no prejudices, no sensation mongering, she reported facts straight, an achievement that cannot be underestimated when one looks around at the way some foreign correspondents bury the facts or twist them to suit sectional interests.

For an unmarried single woman working in a man's world. Rita had her unpleasant times in life. Once an innocuous short story collection of hers, *THE NIGHT OF THE BLACKBIRD* became the subject of a police inquiry, all because one of the short stories revolved round a love affair between a Sinhalese and a Tamil. All copies of the book were seized from the Times printing department and Rita was grilled by the police for suspected sympathies with the Tamil cause. That was in the wake of the trauma of July 1983. Much later, in another instance , a high police oficer placed his revolver threateningly on the table before inquiring into an alleged anti-government report that she had filed abroad.

Interestingly, Rita was a child of a mixed marriage, born to a Tamil father who was a leading lawyer in Badulla, and a Sinhalese mother whom she looked after with care till her death several years ago. A deeply sensitive person, she once half-flung a question at me, and perhaps the other half at herself: "Siva, what do I call myself ? Am I a Sinhalese or am I a Tamil?" You are a decent human being, Rita, and that is all what matters", I assured her. My association with Rita goes back 35 years when we met as fellow sub-editors in Ceylon's first English-language tabloid newspaper, the *CEYLON DAILY MIRROR*. Although we parted ways in journalism nine years later, we hardly ever lost touch with each other since then. In fact, she became not just an ex-colleague, but a family friend. Remaining single all her life. she had a tremendous and aching feeling for family bonds. Whether on the phone or in person, her first question invariably would be: How's the family, Siva?

The last time I met her face to face was in December 1992. She called on me along with my wife at the Madras General hospital when I was under police detention. She remained for a long chat, and the next thing I knew was that she had written a long piece on me in the *SUNDAY TIMES*, Colombo, of 3rd January 1993, under the headline - “In a prison without bars:SIVA'S HOSPITAL BED A NEWS DESK". A faded photograph of me from an old *DAILY MIRROR* group accompanied the article, with a caption that read “Siva: a much misunderstood man”

To the Tamils living in Sri Lanka, Death holds no more terrors. Death, untimely death, violent death, have all become part of the daily way of life. Life itself, like death, has become meaningless to thousands and thousands of war victims in the northeast. It is to the credit of Rita that she died as a person sensitive to the human sufferings of others. To me, she would remain as an irreparable personal loss.

S.Sivanayagam

Professor K.C.Manoharan

Professor K.C.Manoharan, Deputy head of the Defence Studies department of Madras University died under tragic circumstances in a road accident in Madras on 5 January 1996. He was returning from a mercy mission with a lawyer friend when the accident happened. He was 42.

Dr.K.C.M., as he was popularly known was a self-made man. He distinguished himself as a dedicated teacher, a gentle friend, an inspiring guide to the youth, a committed soldier of the Tamil cause, and a champion of the politically persecuted. He was a fluent platform speaker both in Tamil and English and an upholder of Tamil culture. His death is a loss to his students, his beneficiaries and admirers, and more so to the Tamils struggling the world over, in particular to the Tamils of Tamil Eelam.

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